THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

'3 OR 4 FAMILIES': A STUDY OF THE FAMILY AS INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL MATRIX IN SOME NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled '3 OR 4 FAMILIES': A STUDY OF THE FAMILY AS INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL MATRIX IN SOME NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN submitted by Trevor Clarke in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

This thesis essentially presents essays in appreciation and interpretation of four Jane Austen novels. The underlying assumption of the thesis as a whole is that Jane Austen's novels are about what she said they were about: '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village'; further, that her work may be approached with advantage by considering the nature and structure of the families that she presents, particularly the relation of the central individuals to their family and to society, and the development of this relationship within the novel. Jane Austen held quite definite views on the social nature of man, on the structure of society, and on the central place of the family unit within that structure. The first chapter is, in part, an attempt to present something of these views; the remainder of the thesis considers how these attitudes inform her writings, focussing upon the central relationship in four novels. Characters define themselves personally, and for us, the readers, by their attitudes to and relationship with their family. To understand this process of definition we must understand its terms: I have attempted to present these terms. Finally, Jane Austen's novels are essentially social -- in the fullest sense of the word -- comedies: her social

and her comic unit is the family.

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I

INTRODUCTION AND ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD

Jane Austen, unlike her "lawful issue in the shape o' one son [:] . . . 'Enery James"[1], has left little that goes behind her novels explaining the theoretical and artistic premises upon which they are written. What little there is, is expressed, for the most part, casually and familiarly in letters. In a letter of September 9, 1814, to her niece, Anna Austen, herself a would-be novelist, Jane Austen defines the essential material of her own writing.

> You are now collecting your People delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot as is the delight of my life; -- 3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on -- I hope you will write a great deal more, and make full use of them while they are so very favourably arranged.[2]

When Jane Austen is attacked it is usually upon the grounds of the narrowness and triviality of her subject matter -- a narrowness and triviality that are repeated without apology through the six novels. What began in the Juvenilia extends through to <u>Sanditon</u> and does not essentially change. Professor H. W. Garrod may speak as champion of Jane Austen's depreciators.

> She began at twenty, and stopped almost at once; and she began again at thirty-eight exactly where she had left off; her range never widens, her tone never deepens. She invents no new plots, she repeats her characters, she

employs again and again the same setting. The plot is always a husband-hunt -- sometimes two husbands are hunted at once. The scene is always a country village. In the background is a manor house, on the right a parsonage, on the left a dower-house or country-cottage of the well-to-do. There are no cottages of the ill-to-do, and no hovels. . . . Miss Austen has but one plot. . . . the sameness and the tameness of her construction and reconstruction is not a little notable. Her uninviting Village just as it contains neither God nor nature, sheep nor dog, nor any good work, is also void of eligible young men. Accordingly, in each of her six novels, with the single exception of Northanger Abbey, the action begins with the arrival in the village of the Young Eligible.[3]

Ignoring the factual inaccuracy of what Professor Garrod has to say, it may seem that the substance of his harangue is generally true -- as far as it goes. But it hardly begins to 'appreciate' the novels: significantly, it indicates the insignificance and triviality, the narrowness and wilful misunderstandings of those who scratch about the surfaces of Jane Austen's novels in order to 'depreciate' them. Jane Austen essentially anticipated the objections of Professor Garrod, etc., in the letter to Anna, but she does not, either knowingly or unconsciously, out of her own mouth condemn herself. What she defines is the accidence not the substance of her work: '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village is the very thing to work on.'

The world of the novelist is quite obviously a world limited in some way. It is by working within his chosen limitations that the novelist is able to order and impose significant form upon his material, to create art from life. Jane Austen is a social novelist in the broadest sense of the word 'social'. Her subject is one

that has not ceased, and will not cease, to concern the novelist, and which superficially repeats itself in all literature because in all life, with an insistence that defies the ingenuity or ingenuousness of any depreciation by catalogue. She is concerned with the relationship between the individual and his society. Jane Austen presents and explores the means by which the healthy individual accommodates the personal and the collective or social consciousness, and she asserts this accommodation as the fundamental necessity of coherent human life. The six novels are documents of natural human history, but they are more than history for those very reasons with which Sir Philip Sidney claims the pre-eminence of poetry over history and philosophy in his Apologie for Poetrie.

Every artist needs first to limit life to enable him to present his vision of it; experience must be contained by art in order that art may find itself, transcend and exceed the established continents. This is why the 'kinds' evolved, this the importance of the convention in literature. Art needs a context within which the artist may find himself and locate his vision, in terms of which, and in relation to which, the individual work of art can define itself. Theodore Spencer expresses this well in writing of the poetry of Sir Philip Sidney:

> To find his own voice, to discover his own poetic idiom and his own rhythm, is the main business of a poet. . . . But there is one constant fact which is true of all poets and at all times; the discovery of oneself depends on an act of submission. For the poet, as for the human being, to

lose one's life is to find it. . . .

In the sixteenth century, this saving loss of personality, this discovery of self through submission to an "other", could be accomplished to a considerable extent through convention. Convention is to the poet in an age of belief what the persona is to the poet in an age of bewilderment. By submission to either the poet acquires authority; he feels that he is speaking for, is representing, something more important than himself -- or, in the case of the persona, he is at least representing something different from his own naked and relatively insignificant ego; in both cases he has taken the first step toward universality.[4]

What is true for the artist is also true for the individual. The individual defines himself, finds himself ultimately, in terms of his society. Personal success is inevitably seen in a social context. As the writer of the North British Review for April, 1870, realised, Jane Austen has 'a thorough consciousness that man is a social being, and that apart from society there is not even the individual. . . . She sees him, not as a solitary being complete in himself, but only as completed in society.'[5] Neither individual nor artist, life nor literature, can exist in a void. Every novelist must postulate or present some clearly established ethical structure or system of conduct in terms of which his characters may define themselves and be defined for his reader. There can be no significance where there is no context, no realisation where there is no limitation. Thus it follows that the more exact, the more intricate but clearly defined the context in which the characters define themselves, the more nice and precise may be the definition of the individual characters and the discrimination between them. This is not to postulate an infinite progression of

artistic efficiency and excellence in terms of complexity of referent and referendum: there is a point at which the process becomes absurd and the rage for order (definition) itself produces chaos. Jane Austen is fairly the progenitor of Henry James in her nice and precise discrimination of persons and personal relationships.

Most modern novelists define their characters by their reaction against some order or themselves postulate and define the ethic in terms of which their creatures are to be given life and to be measured. Often artificial and closed societies are established, societies with clearly defined and imperative patterns of conduct that make possible the character conflict and analysis that enable precise definition and discrimination. Conrad, for example, characteristically makes the ship's company his social microcosm and it is in this context that his characters largely establish the clarity of their definition.

Jane Austen had no need to conceive a preliminary social artifact or artificially to constrict the focus of her attention and analysis: these things came naturally to her, because they were of her experience. The society in which Jane Austen wrote her novels was one with clearly defined social ethics, where the lines and rules of proper conduct were so precise as almost to make behaviour ceremonial, life ritual. The social complexities which characterise the world of Jane Austen's novels were instinctive to her and to her readers: this clear but

intricate context and the confident knowledge of the instinctual rapport of her readers with it, are what make possible the subtlety and richness, the complex discriminations, the full realisation of Jane Austen's vision. The society she presents was intimately known to Jane Austen and it is the ethics of this society that are pervasive in her novels. But Jane Austen chose further to formalise, and thus define, her vision, and the properties of that vision, by locating them in a closer context and a more readily realisable structured and structural unit: the family.

However complete and scrupulous her knowledge of society, Jane Austen knew nothing more intimately nor precisely than the family, from which and through which, in turn, her own social experience and consciousness had been formed.

> For Jane Austen, humankind was of first importance and in her human world her own family stood foremost. She was by no means confined to its society, but she was never, unless in short visits to her intimate friends, quite separated from it. When she left her own home it might be to travel in company with her parents or her sister, to stay for a while in the home of some of her connexions, or (so soon as they had homes of their own) of one or another of her brothers. From the beginning she was accustomed to the pressure of close quarters on a large family whose notions of hospitality were liberal, pressure under which an individualist would lose spirit or rebel. She learnt how to lead her life unperturbed in a throng -- and so eventually to lead, besides, that other, subterraneous life which the novelist must pass in the company of his fictitious creatures if he is to persuade the reader of their authenticity.[6]

And E. M. Forster is equally pertinent in his review of R. W. Chapman's edition of Jane Austen's Letters:

> The supreme thing in life to her was the family. She knew no other allegiance; if there was an early love affair in the West of England, and if her lover died, as did her sister Cassandra's, she never clung to his memory, unless she utilizes it in Persuasion. Intimacy out of the unknown never overwhelmed her. No single person ever claimed her. She was part of a family, and her dearest Cassandra only the dearest in that family. The family was the unit within which her heart had liberty of choice; friends, neighbours, plays and fame were all objects to be picked up in the course of a flight outside and brought back to the nest for examination. . . . They [Jane Austen's letters] show, more clearly than ever, that Miss Austen was part of the Austens, the Knights, the Leighs, the Lefroys. The accidents of birth and relationship were more sacred to her than anything else in the world and she introduced this faith as the groundwork of her six great novels.[7]

As Forster indicates, some of the material in the novels may have been drawn directly from life, from specific occurrences or individuals and relationships in Jane Austen's own family experience and circle of acquaintances. For example, in 'Catharine, or the Bower', as the authors of the Life and Letters point out, 'the story of the elder Wynne girl is drawn from life: it describes with some exaggeration, the fate of Jane Austen's own aunt Philadelphia Austen, who was shipped to Madras in 1752 and became Mrs. Hancock within seven months. Her daughter Eliza, who became the Comtesse de Feuillide, lost her husband by the guillotine in 1794, and became Mrs. Henry Austen in 1797, paid a visit to Steventon in 1792, the year in which "Catherine" was dedicated.'[8]

The close relationship between Elizabeth and Jane in Pride and Prejudice and, possibly also, Elinor and Marianne in Sense and Sensibility, is sometimes explained as a reflection of the relationship that existed between

Jane and her elder sister, Cassandra. James E. Austen-Leigh quotes Mrs. Austen as remarking "if Cassandra were going to have her head cut off, Jane would insist on sharing her fate."[9] But the relationships in the novels, though doubtless drawing some inspirational impulse and clarity of realisation from that dearest and closest relationship of Jane Austen's life, are conceived and executed essentially independently within the world of the particular novel and as the design and technique of that novel demand. The relationship between Elizabeth and Jane is far from identical with that between Elinor and Marianne and, as the letters indicate, both are different from that between Jane and Cassandra. This should be obvious, for although the material of life provides the material of art, and quite evidently so in these novels, the artist transforms life into art and this must exist in itself: the characters must assert themselves as individuals, must live within the work of art. The relationship between the material of life and the work of art, the degree of transformation, will vary from artist to artist. In Jane Austen, although the material of her art is so intimately the material of her life, perhaps because so, the degree of transformation is extraordinarily high. The author of the Memoir discusses the connection between life and art in his aunt's novels and gives some of Jane Austen's own remarks:

> Some persons have surmised that she [Jane Austen] took her characters from individuals with whom she had been acquainted. . . . She did not copy individuals, but she invested her

own creations with individuality of character. A reviewer in the "Quarterly" speaks of an acquaintance who, ever since the publication of "Pride and Prejudice", had been called by his friends Mr. Bennet, but the author did not know him. Her own relations never recognised any individual in her characters; and I can call to mind several of her acquaintances whose peculiarities were very tempting and easy to be caricatured of whom there are no traces in her pages. She herself, when questioned on the subject by a friend, expressed a dread of what she called such an "invasion of social proprieties." She said that she thought it quite fair to note peculiarities and weaknesses, but that it was her desire to create, not reproduce; besides, she added, "I am too proud of my gentlemen to admit that they were only Mr. A. or Colonel B."[10]

What it is most important to realise is that for Jane Austen the family, with its ties and loyalties, the rights and responsibilities of its members, is the characteristic structure within which she locates and defines her vision. The extent to which, and process by which, she does this were possibly not completely conscious in Jane Austen but her experience and vision are so exclusively and instinctually familial that the product is inevitably instinct with and formalised by what so completely conditioned the creator's mind and Weltanschauung. At the time when Jane Austen was writing, the family as social unit was much more close-knit, rigidly defined and maintained than it is today. Society was generally far more stable and static, and more openly authoritarian, and this was of course also true of the family.

But Jane Austen saw the family as a structure of more than social and personal convenience, in which the individual's particular placement is the temporary result of an accident of birth. She recognized the family as

society in microcosm, where each has his place, each his rights and obligations, and where each must accept the place and the rights of others, and fulfil his own function. The family is the intermediary structural unit between the two poles of the individual and society; itself -- this the healthy ideal -- a shielded, sympathetic society, founded upon instinctive love, it prepares and forms the individual for her -- in Jane Austen, the focus falls upon a young woman -- assumption of social and personal autonomy. It is the arena within which the individual comes to find herself in realising and fulfilling her place within it, and gains an awareness and understanding of its purposeful structure. By accepting and fulfilling the familial role, with all its limitations and restrictions, the individual is able to achieve the integration of her personality, her maturity, and healthily and responsibly to exceed that role.

Society is made up of many individuals, but the basic unit of society is the individual and the healthy society depends upon the healthy individual. The relationship of the individual to society and her progress to maturity, Jane Austen saw in terms of an expanding sphere of acquaintance and correspondingly expanding consciousness. The individual consciousness is at the core of a series of concentric circles of experience and formation; the core acts upon, and reacts to, the circles about it progressively, and the core and the circle must accommodate themselves, their relationship and integration must be 'proof', for

health. The family is the first circle of experience to which the individual consciousness must adjust itself and the success of this adjustment is essential to the success of the adjustment to the outer sphere of society.

Failure to reconcile the centre and the circle leads to failure throughout the entire structure: he who disrupts the health of society is inevitably himself sick, an imperfectly formed and integrated individual. Willoughby, for example, can never be satisfied with his fate. He tells Elinor, "As to that . . . I must rub through the world as well as I can. Domestic happiness is out of the question."[11] He scorns money now that he has it, but the alternative, had he married the penniless Marianne, would have been an alternative groan. He is essentially egocentric, deeply concerned with the figure he cuts, how he appears to the world, his personal image, thoughtless of consequences and contracted ties. "Tell her [Marianne] of my misery and my penitence -- tell her that my heart was never inconstant to her, and if you will, that at this moment she is dearer to me than ever" (S.S., 330). Henry and Mary Crawford are apparently socially highly adept and sophisticated: life is full of fun, charm, and diversion in their company. But this endless passion for diversion is what ultimately destroys any chance Henry might have had with Fanny Price, is directly responsible for Edmund's realisation of Mary's true nature, and is itself symptomatic of the Crawfords' sickness. With them, the façade is all, the brightness

and charm are a shell and it is empty. The life of Henry and Mary is a perpetual divertissement because there is no still centre: they cannot rest because they are bored by themselves. Henry's acting abilities -- he is the best actor at Mansfield -- are closely linked to this lack of personal integration, of identity. He has no moral self and is such a succession of roles that it is difficult to determine his individuality. Throughout Jane Austen's writings, the sick or socially and morally deviant individual is repeatedly the product of an unbalanced or disrupted family life, or of too early independence: this is true, for example, of Willoughby, Wickham, the Crawfords and William Walter Elliot.

The family conditions the moral development of the individual and it also functions in Jane Austen's novels as a standard in terms of which the characters may define their own morality or immorality. Jane Austen began her literary career as a family entertainer and most of this early writing arises from a particular family situation and depends for its effect and fun upon knowledge of the facts and persons involved. A good deal of the fun of the Juvenilia lies in the delighted fascination of exploring and exploiting familial relationships and their taboos. Love and Freindship is dedicated with mock grandeur to Jane Austen's cousin:

> To Madame la Comtesse
> DE FEVILLIDE --
> this novel is inscribed

by her obliged Humble
Servant THE AUTHOR.

This is a 'novel' that is directed particularly against the excesses of the novel of sensibility with its exaltation of demonstrative feeling, and the equation of the intensity of feeling demonstrated with moral excellence and virtue. Sentimentalism defied all restraints -- legal, political, economic -- imposed upon the individual and the spontaneity of his self-expression in feeling. The hero or heroine of sensibility reacts automatically against all these restraints: his natural impulse is to subvert them. The family structure as a system of order and restraint, and especially the father, as the final representative of its authority, are rejected again and again in these novels. This is a feature that Jane Austen seizes on and ridicules in Love and Freindship. Edward automatically anticipates his father's opposition to his marriage and slips into his 'heroic' role:

"Sir Edward, I know the motive of your journey here -- You come with the base Design of reproaching me for having entered into an indissoluble engagement with my Laura without your Consent. But Sir, I glory in the Act -- It is my greatest boast that I have incurred the displeasure of my Father." (85)

Righteously indignant, Edward proceeds to leave -- in his father's carriage. A little earlier he has proudly demanded of his sister,

"Tell me Augusta, tell me with sincerity; did you ever know me to consult his [his father's] inclinations or follow his Advice in the least trifling Particular since the age of fifteen?"
"Edward (replied she) you are surely too diffident in

your own praise. Since you were fifteen only! My dear Brother since you were five years old, I entirely acquit you of ever having willingly contributed to the satisfactions of your Father." (83)

This location of the figure of sensibility in automatic opposition to the institution and authority of the family is expected by Jane Austen immediately to define his folly and degeneracy, and to imply the dangers to himself and to society. These implications are fully and unequivocally articulated in the letters that follow. 'Virtue ceases to have any meaning except as a synonym for sensibility, and sensibility becomes the name and vindication of every anarchically self-indulgent impulse.'[12] Love needs no social context: it is useful in providing the devotee of feeling with an opportunity to exhibit his feeling. The lovers in Love and Freindship are isolated -- even from each other -- egoists. They are inwardly unaffected, because so concerned with exhibiting affection, by events around them, even by accident or death. Laura alludes incidentally to 'the trifling circumstance. . . . The death of my Parents . . .' (M.W., 89-90), and the disastrous overturning of the phaeton is a welcome and opportune distraction for Sophia's agonies of sensibility. Since the lovers may not work, they must steal. Both sets of lovers live for a while on the 'considerable sum of Money which Augustus had gracefully purloined from his unworthy Father's Escritoire' (M.W., 88). Jane Austen is laughing at the absurdities caused by the excess of sensibility, but the playfulness of her humour

and the tendency to farce do not belie the seriousness of her purpose. She is herself fully conscious of the subversive madness of the literary cult of sensibility and her parody of this kind of novel leaves no doubt about the vicious and pernicious consequences of such attitudes when applied to life. Love and Freindship is itself a strange mixture of reality and romance: the romance is largely in the language; the reality underlines the unreality of the 'sentimental' world by logically carrying its commonplaces to their inevitable extreme of absurdity and perversity.

The attitude to the family as indication of personal and moral quality continues through the major works. In Sense and Sensibility Robert Ferrars is at best a conceited fool, and at worst, as circumstances decree, an unscrupulous rogue. His visit to Lucy Steele to dissuade her from marrying Edward ends in his own marriage to her:

> Instead of talking of Edward, they came gradually to talk only of Robert, a subject on which he had always more to say than on any other, and in which she soon betrayed an interest even equal to his own; and, in short, it became speedily evident to both that he had entirely supplanted his brother. He was proud of his conquest, proud of tricking Edward, and very proud of marrying privately, without his mother's consent. (S.S., 376)

John Thorpe, in Northanger Abbey, immediately defines his nature for us by his address to his mother:

> The feelings of the discerning and unprejudiced reader of Camilla gave way to the feelings of the dutiful and affectionate son, as they met Mrs. Thorpe, who had descried them from above, in the passage. "Ah, mother! how do you do?" said he, giving her a hearty shake of the hand: "where did you get that quiz of a hat, it makes you look like an old witch? Here is Morland and I come to stay a few days with you, so you must look out for a couple of

> good beds some where near." And this address seemed to satisfy all the fondest wishes of the mother's heart, for she received him with the most delighted and exulting affection. On his two younger sisters he then bestowed an equal portion of his fraternal tenderness, for he asked each of them how they did, and observed that they both looked very ugly. (49)

That he is an actual and moral lout and an oaf is made clear by the manner and substance of his address to his mother, who is, incidentally, the actual head of the family as the father is dead. He has no more concern for her comfort and convenience than he has for anyone's -- he has dropped without warning upon her and churlishly taxes her to exert herself to provide accommodation for his friend and himself. This want of filial respect is unambiguous in its significance in the world of Jane Austen's novels. But it is not John Thorpe alone who is placed by this scene. His mother finds his boorishness charming, sees his disrespect as evidence of his wit and high spirits. She and her whole family are impugned by this brief scene of greeting. I shall show later how Jane Austen balances the Thorpe and Tilney families and defines the one by the other and by their relations with Catherine, whose attitude and relation to each family and its individual members are made indicative of her development to maturity and growth in self- and social knowledge.

Catherine's reaction to Thorpe here is significant of her condition in the early stages of the novel:

> These manners did not please Catherine; but he was James's friend and Isabella's brother; and her judgment was further brought off by Isabella's assuring her, when they withdrew

to see the new hat, that John thought her the most charming girl in the world, and by John's engaging her before they parted to dance with him that evening. (50)

Catherine is 'green', unsure of herself and of the justice of her responses, but Jane Austen makes it clear that there is nothing essentially wrong with the standards that Catherine instinctively implements. She is fundamentally healthy, socially and personally: what she lacks is social experience and confidence and these she gains in the course of the novel. She is young and impressionable and her youthful imagination is quite normally active. Jane Austen is not concerned to ridicule the folly and stupidity of Catherine Morland in her reaction to the Gothic novel and the novel of sensibility. On the contrary, Catherine's normality is firmly emphasised. What Jane Austen wishes to point out is both the absurdity and the dangers of these novels and their 'ethics' for the average and otherwise healthy young adult whose experience and knowledge of society and the world are limited and in the process of being acquired. The narrator makes the above situation quite clear with direct commentary:

Had she been older or vainer, such attacks might have done little; but where youth and diffidence are united, it requires uncommon steadiness of reason to resist the attraction of being called the most charming girl in the world, and of being so very early engaged as a partner. (50)

Catherine is young and inexperienced, and that she is flattered by even Thorpe's attention emphasises that she has nothing of, for example, his conceit.

Just as Catherine is herself unremarkable in appear-

ance and in mind, so her family life is plain and unexciting; but it is sane and her development is balanced. Catherine is introduced in the novel's first sentence:

> NO one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine. Her situation in life, the character of her father and mother, her own person and disposition, were all equally against her. (1)

Her parents, who appear only briefly at the beginning and close of the novel, are often described by critics as 'shadowy' and 'unrealised', with the implication that they are either failures or really unimportant in the novel. This is not true: they are intentionally cast in low relief by Jane Austen to emphasise that they are normal, average, reasonable, contented, and their family life and background operate as a firm contrast to the fascinating but illusory world of Gothic literature into which Catherine projects herself and against which Jane Austen locates the world of her novel and of life.

> Her father was a clergyman, without being neglected, or poor, and a very respectable man, though his name was Richard -- and he had never been handsome. He had a considerable independence besides two good livings -- and he was not in the least addicted to locking up his daughters. Her mother was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. (1)

The Morland family circle frames the novel and gives it a formal symmetry while emphasising, by the parallel with the novel's beginning at its end, the change that has taken place in Catherine during the novel. In the family, Catherine is protected, she is safe. The sham exaggeration

in the description of Catherine, as 'about to be launched into all the difficulties and dangers of a six week's residence in Bath' (18), is not simply undercut by the events that follow. The difficulties and dangers are not the romantically heroic ones that Catherine, in the manner of Emily de St. Aubert, imagines for herself: they are nonetheless real and painfully humiliating. In leaving the sheltered family life Catherine is exposing herself to new adventures and dangers. She is adrift from her family and suddenly exposed to the world with all its happiness, delights, deceits, hypocrisy and villainy. Catherine survives this shock-treatment; she sheds her illusions painfully, is very often mortifyingly wrong, but she is able to accept and overcome her errors and disappointments, to assimilate and profit by her experience. We witness this process of her learning and her progress towards and achievement of maturity. When Catherine is turned out by General Tilney and returns alone to her family house Jane Austen makes the potential danger to her heroine quite clear:

> Catherine had never thought on the subject till that moment, but, upon examining her purse, was convinced that but for the kindness of her friend, she might have been turned from the house without even the means of getting home; and the distress in which she must have been thereby involved filling the minds of both, scarcely another word was said by either during the time of their remaining together. (229)

Her reception by her family immediately marks her return to safety and security:

Her father, mother, Sarah, George, and Harriet, all assembled

at the door, to welcome her with affectionate eagerness, was a sight to awaken the best feelings of Catherine's heart; and in the embrace of each, as she stepped from the carriage, she found herself soothed beyond anything that she had believed possible. So surrounded, so caressed, she was even happy! In the joyfulness of family love every thing for a short time was subdued, . . . (233)

Mr. and Mrs. Morland, as responsible and representative healthy parents, react with due indignation and surprise to General Tilney's treatment of their daughter:

Without suffering any romantic alarm, . . . Mr. and Mrs. Morland could not but feel . . . that, in forcing her [Catherine] on such a measure General Tilney had acted neither honourably nor feelingly -- neither as a gentleman nor as a parent. (234)

They are not afraid to judge but their judgement is sane and responsible and their interest in his behaviour is not unhealthily nor pointlessly analytic. In any case her experience and self-reliance have matured Catherine:

"Well," continued her philosophic mother, "I am glad I did not know of your journey at the time; but now it is all over perhaps there is no great harm done. It is always good for young people to be put upon exerting themselves; and you know, my dear Catherine, you always were a sad little shatter-brained creature; but now you must have been forced to have your wits about you, with so much changing of chaises and so forth. . . ." (234-35)

The change in Catherine and what she has learned are pointed by the author, who assumes Catherine's consciousness. It is not three months since she left, 'free from the apprehension of evil as from the knowledge of it. Three months ago had seen her all this; and now, how altered a being did she return!' (237).

The process of Catherine's learning forms the central matter of <u>Northanger Abbey</u> and this process is expressed

almost completely in Catherine's relations with and to the Thorpe and Tilney families. She is placed between these two families and her changing attitudes, judgment and intimacy define her growth in knowledge and maturity. As Catherine's movement away from, and return to, her own family forms a symmetrical frame to the central experience of the novel, so that central experience is itself given form by the symmetrical pattern structured upon Catherine's placement between the two carefully balanced and opposed families. Her intimacy with the Thorpes is immediate: Isabella at once claims Catherine as an intimate acquaintance:

> Their increasing attachment was not to be satisfied with half a dozen turns in the pump-room, but required, when they all quitted it together, that Miss Thorpe should accompany Miss Morland to the very door of Mr. Allen's house; and that they should there part with a most affectionate and lengthened shake of hands, after learning, to their mutual relief, that they should see each other across the theatre at night, and say their prayers in the same chapel the next morning. (34)

She is a true figure of sensibility --

> "There is nothing I would not do for my friends. I have no notion of loving people by halves; it is not my nature. My attachments are always excessively strong" (40) --

and attempts -- unsuccessfully -- to force the confidence of her 'secret' love upon Catherine. She describes Catherine's brother and exclaims,

> "You must not betray me, if you should ever meet with one of your acquaintance answering that description."
> "Betray you! What do you mean?"
> "Nay, do not distress me. I believe I have said too much. Let us drop the subject."
> Catherine, in some amazement, complied; . . . (42)

This assumption, too easily and too quickly, of an

intimacy and familiarity that cannot exist is always a sign of vulgarity and untrustworthiness in Jane Austen's writings. In her later work she defines the nature of Lucy Steele and Mary Crawford by this characteristic. Lucy Steele is similarly but more extremely stigmatised by her forcing the role of confidante upon Elinor Dashwood. Isabella, priding herself on her own sensibility, fosters Catherine's Gothic and sentimental infatuation -- they are to read the novels together, and Isabella, who herself acts out the ethics and conventions of these literary types in life, encourages Catherine to do the same.

Eleanor Tilney is carefully and deliberately opposed to Isabella Thorpe. Catherine is, quite correctly, formally introduced to Miss Tilney by her chaperone, Mrs. Hughes:

> The young ladies were introduced to each other, Miss Tilney expressing a proper sense of such goodness, Miss Morland with the real delicacy of a generous mind making light of the obligation; and Mrs. Hughes, satisfied with having so respectably settled her young charge, returned to her party. (55)

All is conducted with decorum and propriety, is exactly as it should be. Straightway direct and implicit, but evident, contrasts are drawn between Eleanor and Isabella Thorpe.

> Miss Tilney had a good figure, a pretty face, and a very agreeable countenance; and her air, though it had not all the decided pretension, the resolute stylishness of Miss Thorpe's, had more real elegance. Her manners shewed good sense and good breeding; they were neither shy, nor affectedly open; and she seemed capable of being young, attractive, and at a ball, without wanting to fix the attention of every man near her, and without exaggerated feelings of extatic delight or inconceivable vexation on every little trifling occurrence. (55-56)

The simple purity and quiet nobility of Eleanor Tilney's appearance express a moral as well as physical contrast to Isabella Thorpe's stylish panache. The progress of Catherine's intimacy with Eleanor is gradual and therefore firmly and reasonably based. Isabella jealously and ostentatiously establishes herself as Catherine's professed intimate, and her promised sister; Eleanor Tilney actually becomes both these things. Isabella nurtures Catherine's Gothic infatuation; Eleanor misunderstands it:

> Catherine . . . in a rather solemn tone of voice, uttered these words, "I have heard that something very shocking indeed will soon come out in London."
> Miss Tilney, to whom this was chiefly addressed, was startled and hastily replied, "Indeed! And of what nature?"
> "That I do not know, nor who is the author. I have only heard that it is to be more horrible than anything we have met with yet."
> "Good heaven! -- Where could you hear of such a thing?"
> "A particular friend of mine had an account of it in a letter from London yesterday. It is to be uncommonly dreadful. I shall expect murder and every thing of the kind."
> "You speak with astonishing composure! But I hope your friend's accounts have been exaggerated; -- and if such a design is known beforehand, proper measures will undoubtedly be taken by government to prevent its coming to effect." (111-112)

The Tilneys as a family act to bring Catherine into fuller contact with reality and against the Gothic fantasy which the Thorpes foster. Henry Tilney's ironies slash the Gothic veil and shroud to tatters, and his father, more ferociously, if less consciously, rips away the last rags of illusion to lay bare a not the less vicious reality to Catherine.

Henry Tilney and John Thorpe are rivals for

Catherine's hand and are carefully opposed by Jane Austen. Thorpe is noise, wind, and misdirected and exaggerated action; his life is built upon constant illusion. He is living a lie because of the vacuity of his self. For him, as for Mary Crawford, the will is the principle of reality. He is as paltry as he is vulgar. Henry Tilney is quietly assured, his confidence such as to inspire confidence in others. The contrast with Thorpe extends even to horsemanship. Catherine reflects:

> Henry drove so well, -- so quietly -- without making any disturbance, without parading to her, or swearing at them; so different from the only gentleman-coachman whom it was in her power to compare him with. (157)

Mrs. Thorpe's indulgence of her children encourages their self-regarding anarchy. General Tilney exercises parental tyranny, but Eleanor and Henry are nonetheless reluctant to act against his wishes, however despotic, and they unstintingly grant him the respect that is his due as their father. Henry acts with great reluctance against his father's commands, 'sustained in his purpose by a conviction of its justice' and deeply pained by what he has to reveal of his father's conduct:

> Henry, in having such things to relate of his father, was almost as pitiable as in their first avowal to himself. (247)

And the marriage to Catherine, though pledged, does not take place until General Tilney himself approves it. This is the one condition that Catherine's parents make to their wedding -- 'His [General Tilney's] <u>consent</u> was all that they

wished for' (249) -- and it is something of which even the young lovers acknowledge the justice and propriety: 'The young people could not be surprised at a decision like this. They felt, and they deplored -- but they could not resent it' (250). Parental acquiescence is one of the permanent conditions for happiness in Jane Austen's comic world -- none of the heroines marries without it, and those of her characters who do inevitably come to grief.

General Tilney operates in the novel to make it clear to Catherine that the romantic horrors and villainy of the Gothic novel are not the horrors of life. The evils of life are no less extreme, but lack the glamour and romance of those of the Gothic novel precisely because they are real and to be experienced. Catherine indicts General Tilney in the Gothic manner, but his actual villainy is no less clear because she is wrong in this. When she is banished from Northanger Abbey, 'the anxieties of common life [begin] soon to succeed to the alarms of romance' (201), and these are not less formidable nor intense because of their foundation in probability; indeed they are 'mournfully superior in reality and substance' (227). On learning the true motives of General Tilney's outrageous behaviour, Catherine feels 'that in suspecting General Tilney of either murdering or shutting up his wife, she had scarcely sinned against his character or magnified his cruelty' (247). In a sense, Northanger Abbey is Jane Austen's definition of the area in which she is to locate her subsequent work and her early

answer to those who claim that her work lacks range and passion.

Northanger Abbey was the first of Jane Austen's novels and it is transitional. Jane Austen's interest in this work was dual: she was concerned to burlesque and expose the literary extravagances of the Gothic novel and the novel of sensibility, but she did this through presenting their effect upon an otherwise healthy young adult. Catherine Morland is the only heroine in Jane Austen who has a completely healthy family and this is mainly because of the author's intention here. Catherine is removed from the family and her Gothic infection cleared by the world. Her exposure is sudden and purgative. Those who stand to her in loco parentis while she is at Bath are not able to fulfil that responsibility. Mr. Allen is at the spa for his health, and of Mrs. Allen, Jane Austen tells us:

> She was admirably fitted to introduce a young lady into public, being as fond of going every where and seeing every thing herself as any young lady could be. Dress was her passion. (20)

And Mrs. Allen herself tells Catherine on her introduction to Isabella Thorpe:

> "She is just the kind of young woman I could wish to see you attached to; she has so much good sense, and is so thoroughly unaffected and amiable; I always wanted you to know her; and she seems very fond of you. She said the highest things in your praise that could possibly be; and the praise of such a girl as Miss Thorpe even you, Catherine," taking her hand with affection, "may be proud of." (50)

Northanger Abbey draws together the concerns of most of the Juvenilia, but moves confidently in a new direction: in

Northanger Abbey the healthy family is tactical and Jane Austen was never again to present such a harmonious family. Before Tolstoi, she realised, 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.'[13] Invariably, however, the emerging adult heroine in these novels leaves the 'unhappy' family circle, if she does not restore its happiness, having found her own.

Catherine Morland is a young lady 'just removed from the awkwardness and shyness of a girl' (18), and Northanger Abbey, like Evelina, is 'the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World'. In the letter to Anna previously mentioned (see page 1) Jane Austen continues her advice to the young novelist by remarking, 'You are but now coming to the heart & beauty of your book; till the heroine grows up, the fun must be imperfect.' This focus upon the young adult starting upon independent life, the emergent and inexperienced consciousness, the process of its maturation and testing, is the recurrent matter of Jane Austen's novels. Each of the novels centres upon such a young adult and records the proving and formation of the consciousness and the provision of an adequate context in which the matured and proven individual may continue to operate meaningfully; where definition may be extended with the significance and reciprocal appreciation and admiration that promise happiness. The fulfilment of the vision of happiness is beyond the confines of the work. Mary Lascelles says that Jane Austen's lovers 'walk off the stage into a

cloud'. This is true, and the reason for its truth is the nature of Jane Austen's novels. Mutatis mutandis, we may apply what Malcolm Muggeridge says of his interest in Lady Chatterley's Lover to Jane Austen's work and her own interests. 'I have always been deeply interested in the administrative side of love. . . . What Lady Chatterley and her gamekeeper did in the woods is, to me, of only passing interest, compared with how they got there.'[14] Jane Austen is also interested -- this is what her novels are about -- in how her characters get to their own somewhat different woods. But to say that Jane Austen's lovers 'walk off the stage into a cloud' is not a fully adequate truth. We do not see the particulars of life beyond the cloud, but we know its nature.

Jane Austen's novels are comedies and their matter is the preparation and substantiation of the context and components of the comic reassertion. Formally, they begin with imbalance, inexperience, incomplete knowledge; the action proceeds from and demonstrates these conditions which infect originally, in varying degrees, the figures of the future comic reassertion. The process of the novel is one of purgation and liberation through acceptance and knowledge, of fulfilment and transcendence through self-denial and suffering and responsible self-assertion as assertion of order and right. This process prepares and defines the context and constituents in and with which the 'prognosis' is made possible and plausible. The unit

within which this process takes place, from which the reassertion springs, and with which it is made, is the family. Jane Austen's comic vision is social in as far as it is familial: her optimism and reassertion are perhaps conditioned in that their expression is limited in their location in the family, but in Jane Austen's world, the mythic underlies the realistic -- the mythos of spring is familial, if not domestic.

Since the 'prognosis' is familial, the testing or proving also takes place within the family circle. In Jane Austen's novels, the heroine's family, or the family within which she finds herself, is always deficient or unsatisfactory in some way. The family is often disrupted or the parental role is either abused or abrogated: the family authority is perverted. The heroine, while maintaining due respect for her parents and family, has to come to see clearly and accept not only her own, but their limitations and weaknesses, and thus herself reject them. Often she has herself unobtrusively and inoffensively to assume the responsibilities that are essential for the family's health. It is accession to, and acceptance of, knowledge, and the unostentatious assumption of responsibility within the family, that prepare for and justify independence and authority beyond it.

II

THE SAVING LOSS OF SELF

Sense and Sensibility is the first novel in which Jane Austen truly asserts her right to be considered, as George Moore has called her, "the inventor of the formula whereby domestic life may be described".[1] In Northanger Abbey she does not fully establish her characteristic familial milieu. This, as I have indicated, is mainly because the novel is transitional, bodying forth the shift from work of primarily literary inspiration and reference to the essentially autonomous conception and personally structured execution of the later writings. The nature of Jane Austen's material and her purpose in the disposition of this material in Northanger Abbey dictated that the emphasis fall upon a particular kind of heroine, particular in her essential normality, absented from a well-balanced, healthy family -- significantly the only fully healthy family in Jane Austen's novels -- and thrown off balance by her exposure to a world where there is no certain correspondence between what is said and what is meant; a world which, she eventually learns, is not to be judged by the ethics, laws, or probabilities of the world of Gothic and sentimental fiction. The world, of England at least, is peopled not by figures of extreme goodness, nor of the

blackest villainy, but by men and women of various and variegated shades of grey.

> Among the Alps and Pyrenees, perhaps, there were no mixed characters. There, such as were not spotless as an angel, might have the disposition of a fiend. But in England it was not so; among the English, she believed, in their hearts and habits, there was a general though unequal mixture of good and bad. Upon this conviction she would not be surprised if even in Henry and Eleanor Tilney, some slight imperfection might hereafter appear; and upon this conviction she need not fear to acknowledge some actual specks in the character of their father, who, though cleared from the grossly injurious suspicions which she must ever blush to have entertained, she did believe, upon consideration, to be not perfectly amiable. (200)

Certainly it is in Northanger Abbey that Jane Austen comes closest, in interest and presentation, to the novelist she particularly applauds in her defence of the kind in Chapter V.

> "It is only Cecilia, or Camilla, or Belinda;" or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language. (38)

Fanny Burney anticipates Jane Austen in also considering 'the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World', and she is a writer for whom Jane Austen has deep, if not unconditional, admiration. But her novels do not lay their stress upon the heroine within the family and thus within society in the way that Jane Austen's most characteristic writings do. The young girl -- Evelina, Camilla, Cecilia -- whom Fanny Burney presents, is vigorously exposed to a world of broad social range, and the locus of action is social rather than domestic; the experience of Fanny Burney's

heroines and the process of their social learning and development take place at the assemblies and events of London and Bath. Superficially, Miss Burney's heroines are more obviously in society than are Jane Austen's, after Catherine Morland; but Fanny Burney's presentation of their growth in social awareness, their developing consciousness, lacks the subtlety, the conviction and psychological truth that Jane Austen's heroines show. Jane Austen's own experience and her profound sense of family ties and the family environment had convinced her that the most common and momentous, the universal, crises take place within the family and its immediate periphery.

Even in Northanger Abbey, where she is closest in situation to Fanny Burney, there is a considerable difference in subtlety and delicacy. George Moore, speaking particularly of Pride and Prejudice in relation to the English novel in general, detects a tendency "towards the vase rather than the wash-tub".[2] The images are apt in a consideration of Jane Austen and Fanny Burney, not only in suggesting Jane Austen's greater formal refinement and sophistication, but in intimating a difference in the quality of the world these two novelists present. There is a roughness, a coarseness, about some of Miss Burney's characters that is no part of the vulgarity of even the most vulgar of Jane Austen's figures. Fanny Burney has likewise a taste for sensation and an unconcern for probability that emphasise by comparison Jane Austen's truth to life and the shapes of

experience. Miss Burney, it seems, would have agreed with Bayes' exclamation in The Rehearsal: "why, what a devil is the plot good for but to bring in fine things?"[3] The final impression of Fanny Burney's world is of bustle and vigour; Jane Austen's is cool and decorous, pulsating with life, but with life that is supremely controlled.

Fanny Burney's society is that of the town, Jane Austen's that of the country village. The difference is significant, and Jane Austen saw it as deeply so. London life was, indeed, rumbustious, gay, extravagant, but it did not foster the permanence and penetration of relations in country society, which was still largely traditional and strongly familial in structure. Describing Jane Austen's own family experience, Mary Lascelles writes:

> Sisters-in-law were accepted -- critically, it might be, and with occasional asperities in judgement: Cassandra and Jane, pushed by circumstances into responsibility for the bringing up of some of their brothers' children, may have come to look upon themselves as censors of all; but the family tie easily survived such friction. It had, in a greater degree, the toughness and elasticity of the tie which bound country society; there was room for differences of opinion, and a breach, an alienation, was unlikely.[4]

This sense of the stability and integrity of country relationships and values, compared with the impermanence, the casualness, and the greater tendency to corruption of town life, finds expression in the novels. In Mansfield Park, for example, the Crawfords' glittering elegance is mere tinsel, and their actual viciousness is, in no small measure, explained by their metropolitan consciousness and instincts.

The structure and movement of Northanger Abbey, and the use to which Jane Austen puts the family unit in it, are, nonetheless, singularly appropriate in a work that burlesques the novel of sensibility. The basic pattern of the sentimental novel is one of departure from, and return to, an ethical centre of natural goodness, in which the ideals of benevolence are concentrated. This centre of natural goodness is repeatedly the family. Thus, in Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield, itself almost archetypal in sentimental fiction, we are presented with a protracted study of the Primrose family, its trials and triumphs. At the centre of the novel stands Dr. Primrose, the Vicar, the heart that beats in the bosom of the family. Disaster succeeds disaster with strange rapidity. The Primrose family suffers a loss of fortune; Olivia, the elder daughter, is tricked by a sham ceremony of marriage, seduced, and deserted; but she is sought out by Dr. Primrose and brought back into the family circle; Sophia, the other daughter, is abducted; George, a son, is imprisoned and sentenced to execution. Thus the family, happily united at the beginning of the novel, is sundered in its trials, but is happily and firmly reunited at the close, all its trials favourably resolved. Similar patterns occur in, for example, Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling, Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality, and in Tom Jones -- significantly John Thorpe's favourite reading -- both in the main Tom-Squire Allworthy movement, and in the history of the Man of the Hill. The pattern is

quite typical, and is paralleled by Catherine Morland's apprehensive departure from family security, her trials and adventures beyond it, and the overwhelming sense of relief and protectedness which marks her return to the family home.

Jane Austen's characterisation in Northanger Abbey is relatively simple; behaviour and motivation, and thus the complexities of personal relationships, are not her exclusive, or rather central, concern. John Thorpe stands revealed from our first meeting; Isabella is really no more difficult to understand; Henry Tilney is a more intriguing figure but our interest is never gratified by any real revelation or investigation of his mental processes, his psychology. In any case, it is the heroine whom we come to know most closely and penetratingly in Jane Austen, and Catherine Morland, we are early told, is 'affectionate', 'cheerful', 'open', 'without conceit or affectation of any kind' (18): she is exactly so at the novel's close. Indeed, we are more completely 'on the outside' in this novel than in any other by Jane Austen. There is no character of the depth and subtlety of Fanny Price or Anne Elliot; Jane Austen does not here 'dive into the recesses of the human heart'.[5]

In Sense and Sensibility Jane Austen abandons literary burlesque and produces her first fully independent novel. It is also her first truly 'domestic' novel, and the happy family of Northanger Abbey is left behind. Sense and Sensibility presents Jane Austen's first unbalanced, if

perhaps most attractive, family and the process of the novel is the assertion of balance, of personal and social health and assurance.

Within a few pages of the novel's beginning, the Dashwood family has lost a father and a fortune. These domestic catastrophes provide an immediate impulse to the action and initiate the conditions that are to help precipitate the later conflict and crises of character. Jane Austen is quick and firm in establishing the nature of the central figures and of the pattern of their family relationships. The early commentary on Mrs. Dashwood, Elinor, and Marianne is vital if the novel is to cohere and produce a unified impression.

> Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgement, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart; -- her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.
>
> Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever; but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was strikingly great.[6]

This passage of commentary is in itself an organic growth, through reflection upon the events the first chapter has described. Jane Austen's commentary on the conduct of Marianne and her mother in face of grief and the deliberate insults of Mrs. John Dashwood exactly prefigures Marianne's

ERRATUM

There is an error in the pagination:
the sequence runs 35, 36, 38, 39 . . .

behaviour after her abandonment by Willoughby:

> They encouraged each other now in the violence of their affliction. The agony of grief which overpowered them at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in future. Elinor, too, was deeply afflicted; but still she could struggle, she could exert herself. (7)

In these passages Jane Austen makes quite clear the temperamental affinity and alliance in self-indulgence of Marianne and Mrs. Dashwood. What she also, if less obviously, insists upon is the essential similarity in the natures of Elinor and Marianne. Elinor possesses 'a strength of understanding', she has 'an excellent heart', her disposition is 'affectionate', her feelings 'strong'. Marianne is 'sensible and clever', 'generous, amiable, interesting'. Too often the differences between Elinor and Marianne are stressed; too often their fundamental similarity in good humour, in sincerity and good nature, is ignored; too often the deep significance of their being sisters is overlooked.

Criticism has not infrequently taken the novel's title, Sense and Sensibility, and argued largely from this that Jane Austen has produced an antithesis, perhaps not wholly intended, between reason and feeling, judgement and passion, sense and sensibility -- between Elinor and Marianne. Marvin Mudrick, for instance, sees this antithetical pattern in the novel, and claims that it is torn apart by an arbitrary and absolute rejection of Marianne,

and thus of feeling, a rejection unwarranted by the action. 'She [Marianne] is a person of strong, complex, and abiding passion, which Jane Austen nevertheless insists on equating with Mackenzian sensibility, and which she ultimately exorcises altogether. Not merely false feeling, but feeling itself, is bad.'[7] 'Marianne, the life and center of the novel, has been betrayed; and not by Willoughby.'[8] This is to ignore so much; to misread and to misrepresent the novel. Laurence Lerner, with more restraint, insists, 'Marianne embodies the strongest positives in the book.'[9] Andrew Wright concludes his discussion with the assertion that 'the "lesson" of the book is that neither mode [neither sense nor sensibility] is adequate, each contradicts the other -- and there is no happy medium.'[10]

It is at least equally possible that the 'and' of the title is finally conjunctive, not disjunctive; that what is implied is not antithesis but synthesis. And what is possible gains in confirmation if we try to read the novel with this in mind: the rift in its structure and impact appears only if we will it to. Surely it is significant that the permanent conditions for happiness in Jane Austen are not presented in terms of some extreme of sense or of sensibility, but in terms of honesty and sensitive understanding, of sincerity and emotional intelligence. These are qualities that all Jane Austen's heroines possess but which they do not all, at the novel's beginning, value truly or utilize coherently and assuredly

in their personal conduct in relation to the unalterable realities of the society in which they find themselves. The title, Sense and Sensibility, implies Elinor Dashwood; less obviously, but no less definitely, it implies Marianne.

Elinor Dashwood has, I believe, even at the novel's beginning effected a meaningful and imperative accommodation of her own nature to that of society. She responds to situations and the conditions of society harmoniously, with sense and sensibility: she is a mature social being. Her maturity, her personal and social well-being, is founded upon knowledge, upon fact and upon the acceptance of fact. She is aware of the realities of her own nature, and of the realities, good and evil, of society; and she accepts these realities and acts in accordance with them.

Joseph Wiesenfarth has said that the difference between Elinor and Marianne is 'the difference between stasis and dynamism in a drama of feeling.'[11] This is, in a sense, true; but if it were absolutely true it would explain, and perhaps justify, those critics who respond to Marianne as 'the strongest positive in the book'. The truth is that Elinor's stasis is dynamised in the novel; the resolution she has made between herself and her society is tested so stringently as to amount almost to a crucifixion in trial of her faith: but the relationship is 'proof'. I must confess to a sense of absurdity in those critics who detect a sudden, or even gradual, increase in the ability of Elinor Dashwood to feel. Andrew Wright holds

that Elinor 'becomes increasingly sensitive as the book progresses',[12] and supports this view by citing Elinor's collapse of composure when Lucy Steele reveals her engagement to Edward Ferrars, and, again, when it is finally made clear that Lucy has, in fact, married Robert Ferrars. But these breaks in Elinor's self-control testify not to an increase in sensitivity, but to the permanent, if subcutaneous, presence of strong feeling. Jane Austen's psychological perception is fine indeed; it is the sudden and totally unexpected eventuality, amidst all the possibilities that have been envisaged, the catastrophic confirmation of the worst, and the cataclysmic reversal to that happiness which was gone forever, that shatter temporarily Elinor Dashwood's composure, as they would obviously shatter that of even the most prepared and self-possessed.

The events of the novel are, moreover, ingeniously and subtly structured by Jane Austen so that, although Elinor's feelings are subjected to a ghastly pounding, she cannot, in conscience, make them known. She must suffer in silence and isolation, even within the family. Elinor Dashwood is the first of Jane Austen's suffering heroines, but they are all made to suffer alone; like Elinor, Fanny Price and Anne Elliot are isolated from those they must live among and from those they love. To assume that Elinor does not suffer grievously from what she has to endure is not merely to doubt the strength of her feelings:

it is emotionally to petrify her.

In February, 1797, Thomas Fowle, to whom Cassandra was engaged in marriage, died of yellow fever in the West Indies. On May 3 of the same year Eliza de Feuillide writes:

> This is a very severe stroke to the whole family, and particularly to poor Cassandra, for whom I feel more than I can express. Indeed I am most sincerely grieved at this event, and the pain which it must occasion our worthy relations. Jane says that her sister behaves with a degree of resolution and propriety which no common mind could evince in so trying a situation.[13]

These lines are worth remembering if, in Volume III, Chapter I, we are unconvinced of the depth of feeling to which Elinor's revelation to Marianne of her conduct, only now possible, bears witness. If we deny the justice of her protest that fortitude is no part of unfeelingness we deny the facts of the novel, we invalidate our response to it, we even -- initiates to the cult of a scapegoat Marianne, a Marianne trodden under foot, or, rather, crushed beneath pen, take note -- deny Marianne.

I said earlier that Sense and Sensibility leaves literary burlesque and is Jane Austen's first fully independent novel. This is true, I believe, although an awareness of the 'philosophy' of sensibility and an appreciation of Jane Austen's attitude to it are essential for an understanding of the novel. In Love and Freindship, Jane Austen wrote a sentimental farce, exposing the stupidity and probably also the hypocrisy of these figures of sensibility, though not, beneath all the fun and good

humour, omitting to make clear the serious and dangerous aspects of such behaviour. This mood of farce has not left her in Northanger Abbey, which is a gaily vivacious exposé of the absurdities and unreality of Gothic and sentimental fiction. Catherine Morland is 'a good-looking girl, with an affecionate heart and a very ignorant mind' (N.A., 111). Her errors are caused quite simply by ignorance, inexperience, and a vivid imagination. Marianne Dashwood is not stupid, and she is not a hypocrite; nor is she merely ignorant and inexperienced, a wide-eyed ingénue. She is a true believer; for her sensibility is not an affectation, it is a consciously chosen and sincerely held faith by which she regulates her life and opinions. The novel demonstrates the potentially tragic inappropriateness of such a faith, of such a response to life. Marianne is not a study in false sensibility, the sensibility of an Isabella Thorpe or a Lucy Steele, who exemplify, in its crudest form, what Henry Mackenzie, the prince of sensibility, in 1785 anxiously referred to as 'a depravity of the most pernicious sort' -- the 'separation of conscience from feeling'.[14] She represents rather Jane Austen's attempt to show, candidly and responsibly, that the ethic of sensibility is personally and socially pernicious.

Catherine Morland's mind is ignorant, but it is open, alert and responsive to experience. She comes to see that people are not always what they pretend, that men and women are neither wholly good nor wholly wicked, that

human characters are 'mixed.' And she accepts and assimilates the facts of experience, tempering her judgement in accordance with her expanding knowledge, shaping her consciousness in relation to reality, accommodating herself to society. This is an inevitable and universal process: it is what is meant by growing up, by attaining maturity. Elinor Dashwood is likewise attuned to reality, her mind is outward going, she responds to life empirically, interpreting situations spontaneously and with her total personality. She is aware of the frequent necessity of venial compromise, and, unlike Lucy Steele, she accepts this necessity without ever sacrificing her conscience.

Marianne is also aware of what is evil, small-minded, unwholesome, or vicious in the world, but she will not accept and she refuses to compromise. To those facts of experience which for her are 'horrid things'[15] she reacts by exclusion, she ignores and rejects them, though she must perforce live with and relate to them. Thus her contact with reality is inevitably imperfect because she refuses to take account of a great part of her acquaintance with it. In her own very different, and so much more engaging, way, Marianne Dashwood, like Lady Susan Vernon, like Isabella Thorpe, like Mary Crawford, seeks to make over reality according to her own will, embracing only those individuals and those facts which are congenial to her. More even than this, Marianne Dashwood is, at the novel's beginning, insistently and unashamedly egoistic, even

narcissistic.

Having said this, I hasten to add that the egoism and narcissism are not congenital aspects of Marianne's nature: they are inherent in the ethic of sensibility; they are of the code, not of Marianne. Nonetheless, in living scrupulously and intransigently by this code Marianne must partake of its nature. Sentimentalism declares that man's nature is essentially noble and will respond instinctively and infallibly to what is beautiful and true in the world. Paradoxically this system of conduct, which teaches that the fulfilment of the self depends upon the sacrifice of the self and sympathetic feeling for others, is inevitably self-regarding: it is a faith whose deity is the self. While extolling the virtues of social humanitarianism, sentimentalism is, in fact, anarchic and asocial since the individual is a law unto himself, acting with unfailing personal rectitude, judging and interpreting spontaneously and without chance of error. Marianne defends herself thus after her visit to Allenham alone with Willoughby:

> "I never spent a pleasanter morning in my life."
> "I am afraid," replied Elinor, "that the pleasantness of an employment does not always evince its propriety."
> "On the contrary, nothing can be a stronger proof of it, Elinor; for if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure." (68)

The sentimentalist has a blueprint of perfection -- the self. Individuals and experience are not interpreted as objectively as is possible but relentlessly subjectively.

"WHAT a pity it is, Elinor," said Marianne, "that Edward should have no taste for drawing."
"No taste for drawing," replied Elinor; "why should you think so? He does not draw himself, indeed, but he has great pleasure in seeing the performances of other people, and I assure you he is by no means deficient in natural taste, though he has not had opportunities of improving it. . . . but he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which in general direct him perfectly right."
Marianne was afraid of offending, and said no more on the subject; but the kind of approbation which Elinor described as excited in him by the drawings of other people, was very far from that rapturous delight, which, in her opinion, could alone be called taste. Yet, though smiling within herself at the mistake, she honoured her sister for that blind partiality to Edward which produced it. (19)

Since all others are measured by the perfection of the self, any deviation in conduct or judgement from this personal ideal indicates unfeelingness and imperfection. The rights of others are permissible, their opinions valuable, only in so far as they coincide with our own. In the same conversation Elinor is alarmed by Marianne's assumption that her relationship with Edward is much more advanced and explicit than is the case.

"I do not attempt to deny," said she, "that I think very highly of him -- that I greatly esteem, that I like him."
Marianne here burst forth with indignation --
"Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! worse than cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again and I will leave the room this moment."
Elinor could not help laughing. "Excuse me," said she, "and be assured that I meant no offence to you, by speaking, in so quiet a way, of my <u>own</u> feelings [my italics] . Believe them to be stronger than I have declared; believe them, in short, to be such as his merit, and the suspicion -- the hope of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence or folly. But farther than this you must <u>not</u> believe. I am by no means assured of his regard for me." (19-20)

We are not responding to the text if we assent in Marianne's judgement of Elinor's feelings here. Jane Austen is clearly seeking to indicate the misunderstandings and

misjudgements to which Marianne is liable, and also to establish the different levels of signification on which the vocabulary of the two sisters customarily functions. Marianne's inflexible and infallible standard of reference, her sensibility, leads her now, and more seriously later, insensitively to devaluate her sister's feelings. Elinor's attempts to lessen her sister's impression of the depth of intimacy between herself and Edward, and thus to prepare for the revelation of his engagement to Lucy Steele, are interpreted by Marianne as mere coquetry. After the particularly trying visit of Edward, which found her alone with Lucy Steele, Elinor seeks to modify Marianne's resentment of Lucy and to suggest that Lucy is on terms, at the very least, of equal intimacy with Edward.

> "What can bring her here so often!" said Marianne, on her leaving them. "Could she not see that we wanted her gone! -- how teazing to Edward!"
> "Why so? -- we were all his friends, and Lucy has been the longest known to him of any. It is but natural that he should like to see her as well as ourselves."
> Marianne looked at her steadily, and said, "You know, Elinor, that this is a kind of talking which I cannot bear. If you only hope to have your assertion contradicted, as I must suppose to be the case, you ought to recollect that I am the last person in the world to do it. I cannot descend to be tricked out of assurances that are not really wanted." (244)

Marianne accuses Elinor of not being what she seems; if there is ironic disparity here between being and seeming it is irony of deep pathos.

That Elinor must not only seem to be happy when she is not, that she must comfort and sympathise with a Marianne who at the height of her own agony rejects her

urgent entreaties that she exert herself as follows, is no small part of Elinor's pain:

> "Exert yourself, dear Marianne," she cried, "if you would not kill yourself and all who love you. Think of your mother; think of her misery while you suffer; for her sake you must exert yourself."
> "I cannot, I cannot," cried Marianne; "leave me, leave me, if I distress you; leave me, hate me, forget me! but do not torture me so. Oh! how easy for those who have no sorrow of their own to talk of exertion! Happy, happy Elinor, you cannot have an idea of what I suffer." (185)

Elinor suffers alone, in isolation, without sympathy or understanding: the sister from whom she would expect deep sympathy misunderstands her, accuses her, even, of hypocrisy. The warmth and intensity of Marianne's grieved outburst when she realises how sadly she has misjudged Elinor should not blind us to its fundamental justness.

> "Oh! Elinor," she cried, "you have made me hate myself for ever. -- How barbarous have I been to you! -- you, who have been my only comfort, who have borne with me in all my misery, who have seemed to be only suffering for me! -- Is this my gratitude! -- Is this the only return I can make you? -- Because your merit cries out upon myself, I have been trying to do it away." (264)

Marianne, then, causes Elinor pain by misinterpreting her condition and feelings. She intensifies her sister's suffering, albeit unwittingly, by frequent references to her happiness and good fortune, and by the confident warmth of her behaviour to Edward. She also distresses Elinor by the impulsive vehemence of defence that Elinor would prefer to be without. On the occasion of their first meeting Mrs. Ferrars, Marianne treats the company with tired unconcern until stung into life by Mrs. Ferrars' pointed rudeness when

examining the screens that Elinor has painted. Even though she does not herself fully appreciate the vicious small-mindedness of the reference to Miss Morton by Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny Dashwood, she bursts out indignantly,

> "This is admiration of a very particular kind! -- what is Miss Morton to us? -- who knows, or who cares, for her? -- it is Elinor of whom we think and speak."
> And so saying she took the screens out of her sister-in-law's hands, to admire them herself as they ought to be admired.
> Mrs. Ferrars looked exceedingly angry, and drawing herself up more stiffly than ever, pronounced in retort this bitter phillipic; "Miss Morton is Lord Morton's daughter."
> Fanny looked very angry too, and her husband was all in a fright at his sister's audacity. Elinor was much more hurt by Marianne's warmth, than she had been by what produced it; but Colonel Brandon's eyes, as they were fixed on Marianne, declared that he noticed only what was amiable in it, the affectionate heart which could not bear to see a sister slighted in the smallest point. (235-236)

It is easy to react here in a manner similar to Colonel Brandon and to minimise, or even ignore, what Jane Austen tells us of the effect on Elinor. But to do so is wrong. Colonel Brandon, the man of true feeling in disguise, is, it is clear, the lover, and while we should honour the blind partiality to Marianne which produces his judgement we should not absolutely share it. As Willoughby falls so Colonel Brandon's rise must begin; but his judgements on Marianne are not final. While we must not doubt what Brandon recognizes, the true goodness of Marianne's nature and her sincere deep feeling, there is another aspect to her behaviour. Marianne acts unreflectingly and uncompromisingly in terms of an ideal personal configuration that must be preserved inviolate and untarnished at all cost. Thus, while she

defends Elinor she gratifies and vindicates herself. The apparent, and real, generosity of her action here does not preclude a motivational syndrome that is, in part, egoistic. An action that is blatantly outward going may be initiated by a response, albeit unconscious, that is self-regarding. Jane Austen is aware that motivation is complex rather than simple, that action may be ambivalent: we should share this awareness.

It is worth recalling the difference in Elinor's conduct after Edward's first disappointing visit to Barton Cottage from that of Marianne, whose sense of loss at Willoughby's departure and her conviction of what is due her grief ensure its present continuance. The author gives commentary that reflects the thought processes first of Elinor, then of Marianne.

> Elinor sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family, and if, by this conduct, she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her account.
>
> Such behaviour as this, so exactly the reverse of her own, appeared no more meritorious to Marianne, than her own had seemed faulty to her. The business of self-command she settled very easily; -- with strong affections it was impossible, with calm ones it could have no merit. That her sister's affections <u>were</u> calm, she dared not deny, though she blushed to acknowledge it; and of the strength of her own, she gave a very striking proof, by still loving and respecting that sister, in spite of this mortifying conviction. (104)

When Elinor undertakes the painful office of herself informing Marianne of Edward's engagement to Lucy Steele --

just one of the innumerable personally distressing actions she takes upon herself to minimise the suffering of others -- she explains her conduct to an incredulous Marianne as follows:

"By feeling that I was doing my duty. -- My promise to Lucy, obliged me to be secret. I owed it to her, therefore, to avoid giving any hint of the truth; and I owed it to my family and friends, not to create in them a solicitude about me, which it could not be in my power to satisfy."
Marianne seemed much struck. --
"I have very often wished to undeceive yourself and my mother," added Elinor; "and once or twice I have attempted it; -- but without betraying my trust, I never could have convinced you."
"Four months! -- and yet you loved him!" --
"Yes. But I did not love only him; -- and while the comfort of others was dear to me, I was glad to spare them from knowing how much I felt." (262-263)

We remember the ineffectiveness of Elinor's explicit appeals, as a final measure, to Marianne's sense of what was due to her family. She did not ask what she did not herself perform. But Marianne's family sense at this point was not so strong as her sense of what was due to her grief, to herself. While Marianne could not convince herself that she was able to fulfil her responsibilities to her family, she did acknowledge her family's right to consideration. She would make no such concession to society.

"No, no," cried Marianne, "misery such as mine has no pride. I care not who knows that I am wretched. The triumph of seeing me so may be open to all the world. Elinor, Elinor, they who suffer little may be proud and independent as they like -- may resist insult, or return mortification -- but I cannot. I must feel -- I must be wretched -- and they are welcome to enjoy the consciousness of it that can."
"But for my mother's sake and mine" --
"I would do more than for my own. But to appear happy when I am so miserable -- Oh! who can require it?" (189-190)

This impassioned rejection of the prerogative of society to require that the individual submit his consciousness to some social consciousness, that he attempt to discipline his passions in the interests of order and propriety, of social harmony and cohesion, is not a sudden, deranged consequence of Marianne's grief: it is an article of faith. She has no social conscience. Individuals merit her consideration and attention at all only in so far as she considers they merit them. On a visit to Barton Park, she declares quite openly her contempt for the forms and figures of that society.

> Lady Middleton proposed a rubber of Casino to the others. No one made any objection but Marianne, who, with her usual inattention to the forms of general civility, exclaimed, "Your ladyship will have the goodness to excuse me -- you know I detest cards. I shall go to the piano-forté; I have not touched it since it was tuned." And without farther ceremony, she turned away and walked to the instrument. (144)

But Marianne's social irresponsibility adds to the responsibilities that Elinor feels obliged to carry. She not only customarily performs the family courtesies but also seeks to palliate Marianne's discourtesies.

> "Marianne can never keep long from that instrument you know, ma'am," said Elinor, endeavouring to smooth away the offence; "and I do not much wonder at it; for it is the very best toned piano-forté I ever heard." (145)

Marianne's refusal to make what she considers social compromise forces Elinor to eat the sawdust she rejects. She is prepared, however, to take note of those whom she normally ignores when it seems to her advantage. Mrs. Jennings, of whom Marianne has said, "I value not her censure any more

than I should do her commendation" (68), and whom she normally ignores, if not resents, suddenly becomes a figure full of interest and importance for her: she presents Marianne with an opportunity of a visit to London, and thus to Willoughby.

"I thank you, ma'am, sincerely thank you," said Marianne, with warmth; "your invitation has insured my gratitude for ever, and it would give me such happiness, yes almost the greatest happiness I am capable of, to be able to accept it." (154)

But her behaviour to Mrs. Jennings does not change, and it is Elinor, undertaking a journey for which she has no inclination and which she has opposed as unwise, who carries the full burden of politeness and civility.

They were three days on their journey, and Marianne's behaviour as they travelled was a happy specimen of what her future complaisance and companionableness to Mrs. Jennings might be expected to be. She sat in silence almost all the way, wrapt in her own meditations, and scarcely ever voluntarily speaking, except when any object of picturesque beauty within their view drew from her an exclamation of delight exclusively addressed to her sister. To atone for this conduct therefore, Elinor took immediate possession of the post of civility which she had assigned herself, behaved with the greatest attention to Mrs. Jennings, talked with her, laughed with her, and listened to her whenever she could. (160)

It is part of Marianne's development, of her growth in maturity, in true amiableness and Austenian candour,[16] that after her illness she takes her leave of Mrs. Jennings with genuine warmth, and regret for her previous recognition only of Mrs. Jennings' vulgarity and indelicacy, ironically ignoring her essential goodness of heart.

The day of separation and departure arrived; and Marianne [took] so particular and lengthened a leave of Mrs. Jennings, one so earnestly grateful, so full of respect and kind wishes

as seemed due to her own heart from a secret acknowledgement of past inattention. (341)

This, however, is part of the general assertion of Marianne's emergent social and personal health. The previous absence in Marianne of any feeling of social responsibility or social conscience -- an absence so complete as to embrace even attempts to dissuade Elinor from fulfilling the obligations she realises are necessary, however unpleasant[17] -- inevitably, then, increases the social stress upon Elinor. Elinor undertakes to pay, as far as she may, the social dues of Marianne as well as her own. She takes this responsiblity upon herself in the interest of Marianne and in the interest of the family as a whole.

Even within the family, Elinor is forced to assume authority and exercise responsibility, properly the onus of the family head, necessary for its health and continuance as a unit, and the well-being of its members. As I noted earlier, Mrs. Dashwood encourages Marianne in her self-indulgent anarchy: she has herself never lost the romantic light which quite obviously filled her own youth, and while she looks back at her past with rosy-tinted glasses she delights to share and stimulate Marianne's visions of splendour. Elinor, conscious that the silence of Marianne about her presumed engagement with Willoughby is, in view of her habitual openness, strange, encourages her mother to settle their anxieties by questioning Marianne:

"Why do you not ask Marianne at once," said she, "whether she is or is not engaged to Willoughby? From you, her

mother, and so kind, so indulgent a mother, the question could not give offence. It would be the natural result of your affection for her. She used to be all unreserve, and to you more especially."

"I would not ask such a question for the world. Supposing it possible that they are not engaged, what distress would not such an inquiry inflict! At any rate it would be most ungenerous. I should never deserve her confidence again, after forcing from her a confession of what is meant at present to be unacknowledged to any one. I know Marianne's heart: I know that she dearly loves me, and that I shall not be the last to whom the affair is made known, when circumstances make the revealment of it eligible. I would not attempt to force the confidence of any one; of a child much less; because a sense of duty would prevent the denial which her wishes might direct."

Elinor thought this generosity overstrained, considering her sister's youth, and urged the matter farther, but in vain; common sense, common care, common prudence, were all sunk in Mrs. Dashwood's romantic delicacy. (84-85)

Considering Marianne's youth and her inexperience, it is Mrs. Dashwood's responsibility as mother to guide and advise her; to give her daughter the benefit of experience she lacks. But Mrs. Dashwood chooses to invert the parent-child relationship, to grant over-generous, and thus irresponsible, consideration to the rights of the child at the expense of the responsibility of the parent. She destroys that tension which makes the relation particularly valuable to the child, because of too much, or too indulgent, love, using the relationship to justify negative behaviour when she should act positively. She grants Marianne an independence of action which she is not yet able to handle.

We should remember that Mrs. Dashwood's accession to full family authority takes place only shortly after the novel's beginning. Jane Austen thus indicates how it is that, with an indulgent and loving husband to moderate the

effects of her extravagance, but without real responsibility to discipline it, Mrs. Dashwood has kept her romantic delicacy, and learnt little, so far, by harsh experience. She is no more fitted to maintain the economic stability of the family, essential to its sound perpetuation, than she is able rightfully to promote the well-being of its members. In the first chapter we see how Elinor, discreetly, and with great delicacy and care not to offend, acts to guide her mother. Mrs. Dashwood's response to Mrs. John Dashwood's insulting behaviour is an immediate resolution to quit Norland Park.

> She would have quitted the house for ever, had not the entreaty of her eldest girl induced her first to reflect on the propriety of going, and her own tender love for all her three children determined her afterwards to stay, and for their sakes avoid a breach with their brother. (6)

And there are later many indications of how Elinor acts to bring her mother to recognize the economic realities of their new position in life. The first description of Elinor is that of a mature young woman:

> Elinor, this eldest daughter whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding, and a coolness of judgement, which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. (6)

Her early maturity, which the novel demonstrates with finality, is accountable to her firm acceptance of and grasp upon reality, which have themselves been shaped and strengthened by her readiness to assume authority within and for the family. The deficiency in the familial and social consciousness of

Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne forces Elinor to accept authority and responsibility, however burdensome, and it is this assumption of authority that leads to Elinor's accelerated maturity: it enforces her growth as a social and a moral being.

I have said that Sense and Sensibility demonstrates and tries the maturity, social and personal, of Elinor Dashwood and I have indicated that Marianne Dashwood is socially irresponsible, in fact antagonistic to society's claims. Her ethic exalts the individual, the self, at all costs, equating society with repression and restraint. Restraint restricts spontaneity, and spontaneity Marianne equates with truth. The restraints of social form permit and encourage calculation, and calculation breeds deceit and hypocrisy.

It is Marianne, rather than Elinor, who is educated in this novel, and it is Elinor, in no small part, who is responsible for educating her. But Marianne learns most by her experience within the novel and the central part of that experience is her relationship with Willoughby.

I said earlier that Marianne is egoistic and narcissistic; the importance of Willoughby in the expression of these aspects of Marianne is not often fully appreciated and Willoughby's place and significance in the novel are therefore misunderstood, as is the precise nature of what has happened to Marianne by the close.

In Chapter III, Marianne expresses her dissatisfaction

with Edward as 'lover'.

"Edward is very amiable, and I love him tenderly. But yet -- he is not the kind of young man -- there is something wanting -- his figure is not striking; it has none of that grace which I should expect in the man who could seriously attach my sister. His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence. And besides all this, I am afraid, mama, he has no real taste. Music seems scarcely to attract him, and though he admires Elinor's drawings very much, it is not the admiration of a person who can understand their worth. It is evident, in spite of his frequent attention to her while she draws, that in fact he knows nothing of the matter. He admires as a lover, not as a connoisseur. To satisfy me, those characters must be united. I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own. He must enter into all my feelings; the same books, the same music must charm us both." (17)

But Edward will be quite suitable for Elinor:

"Elinor has not my feelings, and therefore she may overlook it, and be happy with him. But it would have broke <u>my</u> heart had I loved him, to hear him read with so little sensibility. Mama, the more I know of the world, the more am I convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can really love." (18)

Willoughby, Marianne's dashing 'preserver', nonetheless

equals her wildest dreams:

His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story. (43)

They speedily discovered that their enjoyment of dancing and music was mutual, and that it arose from a general conformity of judgement in all that related to either. Encouraged by this to a further examination of his opinions, she proceeded to question him on the subject of books; her favourite authors were brought forward and dwelt upon with so rapturous a delight, that any young man of five and twenty must have been insensible indeed, not to become an immediate convert to the excellence of such works, however disregarded before. Their taste was strikingly alike. The same books, the same passages were idolized by each -- or if any difference appeared, any objection arose, it lasted no longer than till the force of her arguments and the brightness of her eyes could be displayed. He acquiesced in all her decisions, caught all her enthusiasm; and long before his visit concluded, they conversed with the familiarity of a long-established acquaintance. (47)

Willoughby was a young man of good abilities, quick imagination, lively spirits, and open, affectionate manners. He was exactly formed to engage Marianne's heart, for with all this, he joined not only a captivating person, but a natural ardour of mind which was now roused and increased by the example of her own, and which recommended him to her affection beyond every thing else. (48)

Marianne began now to perceive that the desperation which had seized her at sixteen and a half, of ever seeing a man who could satisfy her ideas of perfection, had been rash and unjustifiable. Willoughby was all that her fancy had delineated in that unhappy hour and in every brighter period, as capable of attaching her; and his behaviour declared his wishes to be in that respect as earnest, as his abilities were strong. (49)

Willoughby encourages Marianne's anti-social tendencies. Without the formal proclamation of Sophia and Augustus in Love and Freindship,[18] Willoughby and Marianne live in a world of their own, sufficient unto themselves.

When he was present she had no eyes for any one else. Every thing he did, was right. Every thing he said, was clever. If their evenings at the park were concluded with cards, he cheated himself and all the rest of the party to get her a good hand. If dancing formed the amusement of the night, they were partners for half the time; and when obliged to separate for a couple of dances, were careful to stand together and scarcely spoke a word to any body else. Such conduct made them of course most exceedingly laughed at; but ridicule could not shame, and seemed hardly to provoke them. (53-54)

In loving Willoughby, Marianne loves herself. He is her masculine equivalent, their coming together is hermaphroditic: the creation of the perfect, because self-sufficient and independent, unitary self. Marianne embraces her genetic reflection, seeks to apotheosise her individuality, finally and absolutely rejecting altruism. This is, of course, to bellow crudely what is expressed with nicety and

tact in the novel, and what is never fully explicitly articulated because Jane Austen's primary commitment is to the life of her creation, and she will not jeopardise it by insisting upon a symbolic scheme. Her symbolic sense is nonetheless sure. She did not articulate the implications of the relationship in precisely the way I have done: she grasped them imaginatively.

The Willoughby that Marianne loves is in great measure the Willoughby she has herself created. His natural spirit and flamboyance, and his dashing entry into her life, engage Marianne's interest and predispose her to him. He is attracted by her, eager to please, and quick to see that he can do so most surely by espousing her tastes and attitudes, by appearing as like her as is possible. Although Willoughby is certainly infected by Marianne's warmth and enthusiasm, Jane Austen suggests the element of calculation in his behaviour in the passages given above. Marianne, rejecting the society that she considers is based upon sham and empty appearances, herself judges far more deterministically and is deceived by an appearance which she herself helps to create. Marianne demands an ideal existence in a world that is demonstrably not ideal. Since she herself lives in inflexible accord with the ideal, she herself embodies the ideal. She deals with what is unsympathetic by rejecting it. Willoughby is to validate and confirm her perspective on existence. He is the justification and the consummation of her ideal. Thus, it

is symbolically and thematically essential that Willoughby be false. He is false to Marianne, but true to the world.[19]

The loss of Willoughby forces Marianne to revaluate experience and redefine her relation to it. Her frantic grief and complete disorientation, culminating in the almost mortal illness, are caused not merely by the loss of Willoughby but by the loss of what he represents. Willoughby is Marianne's projection of herself and of her way of life; his falsity indicts her ethic. Both symbolically and actually, Marianne's urgent anxiety to mitigate Willoughby's perfidy indicates the necessity she feels to extenuate the indictment of her'self'. That the novel does so is just: to Marianne, and to truth. Neither Marianne nor feeling is rejected; they are educated, and realised. And Willoughby's, as Catherine Morland would know, is a mixed character; his disposition is not absolutely that of a fiend.

In Great Expectations Pip, who, in following false lights and false ideals, has been led to act foolishly and selfishly, suffers, like Marianne, an almost fatal illness. His emergence from the fever of illness is marked by a new humility, by a surer perspective on truth and goodness, by a clearer understanding of the meaning of life. He sees that the gentility he has been seeking is essentially to be found within not without: in externalising his self and defining it in terms of the things of the world he has perverted it. Pip's illness, with its crisis and sense of passing through, is a dying into life.[20]

Marianne's contemptus mundi is an opposite but equal improper exaltation of the self. Her experience with Willoughby effects a similar saving loss of self. In Marianne's case the dying into life is appropriately suicidal: her sensibility destroys itself. This is obviously true in an extended perspective but it is even true in relation to the decisive illness. Marianne is emotionally and, or here therefore, ethically disorientated after Willoughby has made it clear that he has deserted her, but she acts, instinctively, in accordance with her ethic. Her agony, followed by her general listlessness and indulgence of the joy of sorrow, is exemplary sentimental conduct, but it causes physical debilitation. The fever is precipitated as follows:

> Two delightful twilight walks on the third and fourth evenings of her being there, not merely on the dry gravel of the shrubbery, but all over the grounds, and especially in the most distant parts of them, where there was something more of wildness than in the rest, where the trees were the oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest, had -- assisted by the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings -- given Marianne a cold so violent, as, though for a day or two trifled with or denied, would force itself by increasing ailments, on the concern of every body, and the notice of herself. (305-306)[21]

Marianne's re-emergence into physical health is accompanied by a new spiritual and social health. Her sickness has brought her health; the distorting slough is gone, she sees life full, as it is, not constricted by a deterministic ethic. Marianne has not been betrayed, she has realised herself. Before, she responded in part and therefore saw

only in part; now, she can respond with the wholeness of her being. She is able to put away childish things and accept maturity. The new Marianne is, then, not the rejection of the old Marianne but her fulfilment. It is one of Jane Austen's charming ironies that Marianne indeed marries a man of feeling, but one whom, as Elinor with Edward, she 'esteems' before she loves.

The climax and resolution of the process of Marianne's learning are effected through her relationship with Willoughby, but this experience informs, and illuminates for Marianne, her relationship to her other family members, particularly to Elinor, and to society as a whole. Marianne sees the truth of her own nature, but she sees this so fully only because she has gained a clear perspective on Elinor. Elinor is not an ideal -- Jane Austen does not deal in ideals: she <u>is</u> an example. Elinor is an integrated human being, sensitive of her individuality, conscious that man is born in apartness. Yet man is not, she is aware, born to live in apartness: he is not finally an autonomous entity. Elinor's healthy, meaningful autonomy is achieved through her social connection, her social conscience and dependence -- she is completed in society. At the novel's beginning Marianne scorns that completion. During the novel, Elinor and Marianne are involved in closely paralleled situations, they undergo a similar 'progress', which tests and reveals their personal and social stability. Elinor achieves her progress with dignity and poise: personal

suffering is a condition of social life which, she knows, must be accepted, and she strives to regulate her conduct so that her personal harmony is deranged as little as is possible, and so that her suffering does not disrupt social cohesion. Marianne refuses to moderate and control her grief, occasioning family distress, social discomfort, and near personal disaster. It is part of the novel's irony that Elinor, who behaves with family and social responsibility, receives no sympathy or comfort in her distress, while Marianne, who scorns social obligations, is treated with consideration and compassion. Thus Marianne's perspective on herself is aided and fostered, is clarified by her perspective on Elinor. In reviewing her own conduct, she must review also the conduct of Elinor under circumstances essentially similar. Elinor's conduct illuminates her own, and she feels nothing more keenly than her misjudgement and inconsiderateness of her sister. Marianne's nature is not identical with her sister's but its basis is the same. Her proper realisation of Elinor prompts the true crysallization of herself.

The final speech of <u>King Lear</u> is a comment upon the preceding events and a plea:

> Edgar: The weight of this sad time we must obey;
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
> (Act V, Scene III, 323-324)

The sense of tragedy is heightened by the inevitable inadequacy and impotence of man's response to it, and by the need to turn away, to go on. But Edgar's words also recall the

genesis of the tragedy in Act I where Cordelia did exactly this. Thus the play closes with an indirect tribute to Cordelia, to goodness and truth; but, with the strangled Cordelia and the broken Lear dead on the stage before us, the tribute is tragically ironic. The play demonstrates the not unlikely fate of truth and goodness, of those who "speak what they feel, not what they ought to say", in a world where hypocrisy and deceit are so prevalent. Marianne Dashwood is a young woman firmly committed to speaking what she feels rather than what she ought to say, and one who judges others by their seeming espousal of a similar code of behaviour. Sense and Sensibility presents the potentially tragic consequences of such behaviour in this imperfect world. But it is not finally tragic and Marianne comes to see that reality is not to be dealt with by rejection but by a full and vital response to experience. Sincerity and truth are not exorcised, they are essential: but they are not enough.

In stressing the serious aspects of Sense and Sensibility I have inevitably done injustice to it as a novel, and as a comedy. An interesting difference between Elinor and Marianne and their perspective on experience at the novel's beginning is Marianne's lack of a sense of humour. Unlike Elinor, she cannot bear to be laughed at, and she certainly would never think of laughing at herself. Nonetheless, Jane Austen often finds her amusing and expects us to share the fun. That this is a novel with a 'lesson' is true, but it is far juster to Jane Austen and to the experience of reading to express this differently and to

say that it tells us something about life. Jane Austen's didacticism is rarely oppressive: she is able to educate us without alienating our sympathies. We do not feel that she has a palpable design on us. Her abiding qualities are good humour and wit, or, as Lord David Cecil would have it, sunshine and unselfishness.[22] Perhaps; however, in Sense and Sensibility, she is at times a little too pressing.

My discussion so far has centred very largely on the three members of the Dashwood family. While Jane Austen exposes the weakness of this family, she nonetheless defines its essential strength and attractiveness by contrast with other families in the novel. John Dashwood, Henry Dashwood's son by a previous marriage, lacks 'the strong feelings of the rest of the family' (5). 'He was not an ill-disposed young man, unless to be rather cold hearted, and rather selfish, is to be ill-disposed; but he was, in general, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties' (5). He is in fact the epitome of everything Marianne despises. His worst tendencies have been confirmed by marriage: 'Mrs. John Dashwood was a strong caricature of himself; -- more narrow-minded and selfish' (5).

The weakness of John Dashwood, mental and moral, and the abuse to which family responsibility may be turned, are shown in Chapter II. John Dashwood has promised, in accordance with his father's dying request, to help his

step-mother and sisters financially. In this second chapter we see how Fanny Dashwood convinces her husband by a mixture of calculating ingenuousness and flexible literal-mindedness that he should not, 'in conscience', and in fulfilment of his responsibilities to his own family, do anything at all. He will be 'impoverishing' 'their dear little boy'. She begins her attack thus:

> How could he answer it to himself to rob his child, and his only child too, of so large a sum? And what possible claim could the Miss Dashwoods, who were related to him only by half blood, which she considered as no relationship at all, have on his generosity to so large an amount. It was very well known that no affection was ever supposed to exist between the children of any man by different marriages; and why was he to ruin himself, and their poor little Harry, by giving away all his money to his half sisters? (8)

The economic value of emotion is exposed in the incongruous exploitation here of 'only child', and the mathematical precision of Fanny Dashwood's insistence on half blood, which becomes no blood at all, suggests creatures that are really only semi-human anyway. The three thousand pounds becomes <u>all</u> his money and is juxtaposed to the fractional nature of its recipients -- half sisters. For Fanny the principle of reality is financial and facts have validity only as they are informed by this principle. John Dashwood himself brings forward the answer to all Fanny's deviousness -- "It was my father's last request to me" -- but his intentions are insidiously and quite easily eroded by his wife's avarice. He is finally brought to see that 'it would be absolutely unnecessary, if not highly indecorous, to do more for the widow and children of his father, than

such kind of neighbourly acts as his own wife pointed out' (13). Appropriately he is not allowed to perform even these neighbourly acts for his family. The only presents of fish or game that the three Dashwoods receive in the novel are from Sir John Middleton.[23]

The meanness of the John Dashwood family in money matters is an expression of their meanness and rapacity of spirit. Fanny Dashwood is the true child of Mrs. Ferrars, whose presence haunts the novel long before she actually appears. Mother and daughter unite in the ironically misguided persecution of Elinor whom they see as threatening their plans for Edward's marriage to Miss Morton, a woman of fortune. Edward has, in fact, no individual rights in their view: it is his sole responsibility to aggrandize the family image and to increase its wealth by a 'good' marriage. The means by which Mrs. Ferrars seeks to enforce her will, and expresses her pleasure or displeasure, is money. Emotion and affection are regulated and replaced by the cash register. Money is the basis and the end of her existence. When Edward's engagement to Lucy Steele is revealed she reacts by disinheriting him, by choking all possible sources of his income that she may, and by promising whatever future economic persecution may be in her power. John Dashwood, who has easily assimilated the Ferrars' spirit, gives this report of the rupture to Elinor and Marianne:

"Duty, affection, every thing was disregarded. I never thought Edward so stubborn, so unfeeling before. His mother explained to him her liberal designs, in case of his

marrying Miss Morton; told him that she would settle on him the Norfolk estate, which, clear of land-tax, brings in a good thousand a-year; offered even, when matters grew desperate, to make it twelve hundred; and in opposition to this, if he still persisted in this low connection, represented to him the certain penury that must attend the match. His own two thousand pounds she protested should be his all; she would never see him again; and so far would she be from affording him the smallest assistance, that if he were to enter into any profession with a view of better support, she would do all in her power to prevent his advancing in it." (266-267)

The irreconcilable gulf that exists between the two branches of the Dashwood family is expressed by the breakdown in communication that follows:

Here Marianne, in an ecstasy of indignation, clapped her hands together, and cried, "Gracious God! can this be possible!"

"Well may you wonder, Marianne," replied her brother, "at the obstinacy which could resist such arguments as these. Your exclamation is very natural." (267)

Mrs. Ferrars' coup de grâce is to settle her estate upon Edward's younger brother, Robert. This is an act which calls forth John Dashwood's deepest commiseration:

"Can anything be more galling to the spirit of a man," continued John, "than to see his younger brother in possession of an estate which might have been his own? Poor Edward! I feel for him sincerely." (269)

Actually Mrs. Ferrars' calculated vindictiveness resolves the situation. Lucy sees that it is more to her advantage now to net the younger brother, and his conceit and stupidity make him an easy prey to her sly flattery. And, despite the fact that Mrs. Ferrars has evidently forfeited her right to filial consideration, Edward, the son who throughout has seemed doomed to marry without her consent, is the only son to marry with it. In the final chapter Mrs. Ferrars and her familial decrees are presented

in their full absurdity: she is a figure in a private farce, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Jane Austen can now treat her with open contempt: she poses no absolute threat to her lovers. Nevertheless, their marriage takes place with her consent.

> After such an ungracious delay as she owed to her own dignity, and as served to prevent every suspicion of good-will, she issued her decree of consent to the marriage of Edward and Elinor. (373-374)

Robert, her favourite child, delights in having married in opposition to her will, and is soon forgiven. Lucy, it seems, is triumphant.

> Lucy became as necessary to Mrs. Ferrars, as either Robert or Fanny; and while Edward was never cordially forgiven for having once intended to marry her, and Elinor, though superior to her in fortune and birth, was spoken of as an intruder, <u>she</u> was in every thing considered, and always openly acknowledged, to be a favourite child. (377)

Elinor <u>is</u>, in fact, an intruder; unlike Lucy, she has no kinship with malice and viciousness, with self-seeking and hypocrisy. The half blood that relates her to John Dashwood is no blood at all.

III

"HE IS A GENTLEMAN; I AM A GENTLEMAN'S DAUGHTER; SO FAR WE ARE EQUAL."

In his 'Notes on the Novels' at the end of Jane Austen: Facts and Problems, R. W. Chapman refers to Miss Austen's 'defiance of the probabilities of heredity.'[1] He goes on: 'This stares us in the face at Longbourn, where the family circle comprises extremes of vice and virtue, wit and pedantry, shrewdness and folly.' And he proposes tentatively that 'It is just possible that Jane Austen never looked at her families in this light.'

Before considering the Bennet family in the light of the above, I should like to glance at Jane Austen's earlier families. Certainly in Northanger Abbey we know very little in particular of Mr. and Mrs. Morland; but what we do know hardly conflicts with what we know of Catherine. What is most important about the Morlands is that they be seen as representative healthy parents, as Catherine is herself a fairly typical, intelligent young girl. They are given 'a local habitation and a name' but what we are told stresses their normality while it just fixes them as individuals. General Tilney's wife has been dead some years and there is no doubt, from the way they cherish her memory, that Henry and Eleanor were closer

to their mother than they have ever been to their father. Captain Tilney's selfish irresponsibility marks him as no unlikely son to the General.

In Sense and Sensibility I have already indicated the importance of Mr. Henry Dashwood's presence at the very beginning of the novel, and that this importance lies particularly in his remaining essentially an unknown. I have shown that the natures of Elinor and Marianne are substantially alike and that the apparent divergencies are not permitted to conceal their fundamental kinship. Jane Austen is careful to make it clear that the closest relationship and temperamental affinity exists between Marianne and her mother and, while this in itself effectively links the three as a family group, it helps to explain Elinor's greater maturity and responsibility by suggesting, perhaps, a closer relationship with the father, and, at least, a quiet independence of spirit. Margaret, the third daughter, is perplexing in being so inessential to the novel, but she can hardly be called a 'defiance of the probabilities of heredity.' We ought to remember, also, that she is only thirteen, that there is no real reason why she should be more actively involved than she is, and that she does serve some small purpose as, for example, in giving Mrs. Dashwood the wherewithal to combat Elinor's major objections to the London visit.

"I am delighted with the plan," she cried, "it is exactly what I could wish. Margaret and I shall be as much benefited by it as yourselves. When you and the Middletons

are gone, we shall go on quietly and happily together with our books and our music! You will find Margaret so improved when you come back again!" (S.S., 155)

The relationship with John Dashwood is essential to the development and movement of the novel, and Jane Austen establishes a situation of great potential and flexibility for her story while distinguishing the inherited qualities of John Dashwood from those of the Dashwood girls by making him the child of Henry Dashwood's first marriage to a woman of whom we know nothing except -- and this is a telling piece of information -- that she was very wealthy. In the Ferrars' family, Mrs. Ferrars is the only surviving parent, and Edward is clearly considered a black sheep.

Thus it seems fair to say that Jane Austen extends or blurs the probabilities of heredity rather than that she defies them. In Pride and Prejudice she presents a husband and wife of very different temperament and natural abilities. Mr. Bennet is a gentleman, a man of intelligence, discrimination, and good taste. Sadly, he was induced by Mrs. Bennet's youthful beauty to suspend the proper activity of his discriminatory faculties and he married a fool, a woman of vulgarity and small worth. The first chapter leaves us in no doubt concerning the character and domestic relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet. We see how they relate to each other, listen to Mrs. Bennet's irksome, petulant, silly verbosity, and her husband's laconic, bored unresponsiveness, except as she serves as stone for the flint of his wit. And after this opening, illustrative conversation the

narrator places the characters unequivocally and incisively for us:

> Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develope. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (5)

Mr. Bennet reacts to his wife either by ignoring her or with irony. In Chapter XX she bursts in upon him wild with the news that Elizabeth has rejected Mr. Collins' proposal:

> "Oh! Mr. Bennet, you are wanted immediately; we are all in an uproar. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him, and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have her."
> Mr. Bennet raised his eyes from his book as she entered, and fixed them on her face with a calm unconcern which was not in the least altered by her communication. (111)

She is bewildered by his handling of the affair; indeed, her confusion is what he invariably intends, but when she persists Mr. Bennet, tired of the sport, coolly dismisses her:

> "What do you mean, Mr. Bennet, by talking in this way? You promised me to insist upon her marrying him."
> "My dear," replied her husband, "I have two small favours to request. First, that you will allow me the free use of my understanding on the present occasion; and secondly, of my room. I shall be glad to have the library to myself as soon as may be." (112)

Mr. Bennet is detached and withdrawn; his habitual response, if he responds at all, is ironic. But irony has become more than defence with him, it has bred insensitivity. His emotional life is sterile and he retreats into cerebral

aloofness and self-sufficiency, concerning himself as little as possible with his wife and family, for the most part careless how they behave provided he is left in peace.

Despite the obvious delight she takes in Mr. Bennet and his dry wit, Jane Austen emphasises that his behaviour is irresponsible and reprehensible. His fate is not so unusual; he is one of a number of Jane Austen's husbands who regret the precipitancy of their infatuation. Elinor's conclusions about Mr. Palmer in Sense and Sensibility are fair comment on Mr. Bennet in this novel.

> Elinor was not inclined, after a little observation, to give him credit for being so genuinely and unaffectedly ill-natured or ill-bred as he wished to appear. His temper might perhaps be a little soured by finding, like many others of his sex, that through some unaccountable bias in favour of beauty, he was the husband of a very silly woman, -- but she knew that this kind of blunder was too common for any sensible man to be lastingly hurt by it. -- It was rather a wish of distinction she believed, which produced his contemptuous treatment of every body, and his general abuse of every thing before him. It was the desire of appearing superior to other people. (S.S., 112)

Although Mr. Bennet is a more complex figure than Mr. Palmer, the judgement is hardly less valid. And while there is sympathy for Mr. Bennet in the following statement of his situation, the words 'true philosopher' are surely loaded:

> HAD Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown. But Mr. Bennet was not of a disposition to seek comfort for the disappointment which his own imprudence had brought on, in any of those pleasures which too often console the

unfortunate for their folly or their vice. He was fond of the country and of books; and from these tastes had arisen his principal enjoyments. To his wife he was very little otherwise indebted, than as her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement. This is not the sort of happiness which a man would in general wish to owe to his wife; but where other powers of entertainment are wanting, the true philosopher will derive benefit from such as are given. (236)

When Elizabeth represents to her father the dangers and recklessness of permitting Lydia to go to the camp at Brighton, he acknowledges the probable improprieties that will result but wryly argues that Lydia is best left to the lessons of experience.

"Lydia will never be easy till she has exposed herself in some public place or other, and we can never expect her to do it with so little expense or inconvenience to her family as under present circumstances." (230)

And despite the strength and persistence with which Elizabeth points out the reflection of Lydia's conduct on the family as a whole, and his responsibility as her father and as family head, Mr. Bennet is not moved to any firm preventive action.

Mr. Bennet saw that her whole heart was in the subject; and affectionately taking her hand, said in reply,
"Do not make yourself uneasy, my love. Wherever you and Jane are known, you must be respected and valued; and you will not appear to less advantage for having a couple of -- or I may say, three very silly sisters. We shall have no peace at Longbourn if Lydia does not go to Brighton. Let her go then." (231-232)

The action justifies Elizabeth and indicts her father.

There is, however, no doubt about Mr. Bennet's natural abilities and sharpness of mind: these Elizabeth has inherited and she, more even than Jane, is her father's favourite child. Her irony, unlike Mr. Bennet's, is

responsible and discriminating; his has become almost automatic. Father and daughter are alike, also, in their tendency to categorise people, to classify them as early as possible in the relationship and to enjoy the pleasure of observing the shrewd aptness of the classification. Thus they agree on receipt of Mr. Collins' letter that he is not likely to be a sensible man, and Collins, indeed, becomes one of the delights of Mr. Bennet's existence. They are both wrong about Darcy and some of Elizabeth's most painful moments arise from her father's assumption of her complicity in the absurd joke that she should love, even marry, a man for whom they both know she feels dislike and contempt. And it is important to Elizabeth that her father like Darcy, that they learn to esteem each other; she watches anxiously as their better understanding and knowledge of each other develops.

While Elizabeth is unequivocally her father's daughter, though without the jaundice of his cynicism,[2] she is the daughter least liked by her mother. Lydia, the youngest daughter, is Mrs. Bennet's favourite. It is easy to see why. Lydia shares her mother's folly and her mother's interests; she enters with equal and voluble enthusiasm into 'schemes', is piqued and elated by similar trivia, and she is self-centredly, unselfconsciously, and irredeemably vulgar. The business of Mrs. Bennet's life is getting her daughters married; of Lydia's getting herself married -- before any of her sisters if she can manage

it. She delights in having a gay, empty-headed time with any and all of the officers while awaiting her catch, and she intends to continue her flirtations with hardly less extravagance when she has a husband. She has no thought for others, is careless of the pain she causes her family, in things great and small. When Mrs. Forster invites her to Brighton, her joy bursts forth regardless:

> The rapture of Lydia on this occasion, her adoration of Mrs. Forster, the delight of Mrs. Bennet, and the mortification of Kitty are scarcely to be described. Wholly inattentive to her sister's feelings, Lydia flew about the house in restless ecstasy, calling for every one's congratulations, and laughing and talking with more violence than ever; whilst the luckless Kitty continued in the parlour repining at her fate in terms as unreasonable as her accent was peevish. (230)

Lydia's marriage brings her no sense of responsibility, no greater sobriety of spirits: she becomes a woman with new rights and consequence. Elizabeth watches 'Lydia, with anxious parade walk up to her mother's right hand, and hear[s] her say to her eldest sister, "Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman"' (317). She invites her sisters to Newcastle to stay with her and undertakes to set about getting them husbands:

> "You and papa, and my sisters, must come down and see us. We shall be at Newcastle all the winter, and I dare say there will be some balls, and I will take care to get good partners for them all."
>
> "I should like it beyond any thing!" said her mother.
>
> "And then when you go away, you may leave one or two of my sisters behind you; and I dare say I shall get husbands for them before the winter is over."
>
> "I thank you for my share of the favour," said Elizabeth; "but I do not particularly like your way of getting husbands." (317)

As yet Lydia has no children of her own to provide her life with its new business, but she is anxious to share her mother's responsibilities while awaiting her own. They have identical views on the importance and means of getting these husbands. Lydia is proudly self-assured and condescending to her unmarried sisters:

"I only hope they may have half my good luck. They must all go to Brighton. That is the place to get husbands. What a pity it is, mamma, we did not all go."
"Very true; and if I had my will, we should." (317)

But Lydia is not merely Mrs. Bennet's favourite daughter, she is Mrs. Bennet herself at Lydia's age. When Mr. Bennet piques his wife by insisting on the stupidity of his two youngest daughters she replies,

"My dear Mr. Bennet, you must not expect such girls to have the sense of their father and mother. -- When they get to our age I dare say they will not think about officers any more than we do. I remember the time when I liked a red coat myself very well -- and indeed so I do still at my heart; and if a smart young colonel, with five or six thousand a year, should want one of my girls, I shall not say nay to him". (29)

And Mrs. Bennet shares the disappointment of Kitty and Lydia when there seems no chance of following the militia to Brighton:

Their affectionate mother shared all their grief; she remembered what she had herself endured on a similar occasion, five and twenty years ago.
"I am sure," said she, "I cried for two days together when Colonel Millar's regiment went away. I thought I should have broke my heart." (229)

Lydia's immorality is vacuous rather than vicious: she is totally unaware that she has offended either morality or delicacy. The extreme of vice to which R. W. Chapman

presumably refers is rather another manifestation of the Bennet folly.

> Lydia was Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless. She turned from sister to sister, demanding their congratulations, and when at length they all sat down, looked eagerly round the room, took notice of some little alteration in it, and observed, with a laugh, that it was a great while since she had been there. (315)

And the news of Lydia's wedding has this effect on Mrs. Bennet, who until now has been languishing impotently in bed, adding to the family troubles rather than helping confront them:

> Mrs. Bennet could hardly contain herself. As soon as Jane had read Mr. Gardiner's hope of Lydia's being soon married, her joy burst forth, and every following sentence added to its exhuberance. She was now in an irritation as violent from delight, as she had ever been fidgetty from alarm and vexation. To know that her daughter would be married was enough. She was disturbed by no fear for her felicity, nor humbled by any remembrance of her misconduct. (305-306)

The point is emphasised as she excitedly negotiates with Mr. Bennet for Lydia's wedding clothes:

> Mrs. Bennet found, with amazement and horror, that her husband would not advance a guinea to buy clothes for his daughter. He protested that she should receive from him no mark of affection whatever, on the occasion. Mrs. Bennet could hardly comprehend it. That his anger could be carried to such an inconceivable resentment, as to refuse his daughter a privilege, without which her marriage would scarcely seem valid, exceeded all that she could believe possible. She was more alive to the disgrace, which want of new clothes must reflect on her daughter's nuptials, than to any sense of shame at her eloping and living with Wickham, a fortnight before they took place. (310-311)

Her vacuity and that of Lydia are of the same unmitigated blankness.

Kitty, the second youngest of the Bennet family, is a follower, sharing in and infected by Lydia's folly,

without Lydia's absolute brashness. There is hope for her, and her redemption is one manifestation of the comic reassertion and regeneration at the close.

> Kitty, to her very material advantage, spent the chief of her time with her two elder sisters. In society so superior to what she had generally known, her improvement was great. She was not of so ungovernable a temper as Lydia, and, removed from the influence of Lydia's example, she became, by proper attention and management, less irritable, less ignorant, and less insipid. From the farther disadvantage of Lydia's society she was of course carefully kept, and though Mrs. Wickham frequently invited her to come and stay with her, with the promise of balls and young men, her father would never consent to her going. (385-386)

Mary, lacking the beauty to compete with her sisters, locates her folly in pedantry and intellectual affectation. She is mentally ponderous and conceited; as Jane Austen hints, Mr. Collins would have done well to direct his matrimonial effusions at this daughter.

The natural affinity of Jane and Elizabeth is clear from the closeness of the relationship which has developed between them. Jane has none of Elizabeth's sprightliness of mind nor the irreverent incision of her wit; she has more natural 'candour' than Elizabeth, but that they are sisters is surely incontestable. That the relationship between Jane and Elizabeth should so often be claimed as the literary expression of that between Cassandra and Jane Austen herself is no small tribute to the authenticity of the presentation.

In discussing heredity, we should remember that the inherited qualities of an individual are not determined only by the apparent qualities of his parents. Mrs. Bennet

is foolish but her brother, Mr. Gardiner, is a man of good sense, fine breeding, and character. Jane Austen does not show the interest in heredity and generational growth of, say, Thackeray and Trollope; her novels are not intended as studies in heredity -- an intention which could, in any case, only be comprehended by the generational sweep of later novelists -- but she is careful either to provide herself with genetic license or to present families whose members show no irreconcilable divergencies in nature. Most often she does both. Her knowledge of families was not small, and the extent and variety of her own ought to give check to judgements that find that Jane Austen defied the probabilities of heredity.

The central matter of Pride and Prejudice is of movement towards that point where two individuals may confront each other. Jane Austen described the novel as 'rather too light, and bright, and sparkling',[3] and it is certainly the most romantic of her comedies. Nowhere else are we left with a comparable sense of all-conquering love, of individuals not so much defying as encompassing and transcending social and familial barriers.

In Sense and Sensibility, the action presents the process of an achieved and significant social perspective. The perspective that Darcy and Elizabeth achieve is most importantly upon each other, upon the self, and the value of the other to the self. What has taken place is a shift in emphasis and in point of focus. It is because Elizabeth

and Darcy are responsible social beings, because they are aware and considerate of the pressures of social life and consequence, that the novel finally permits them to evaluate and discriminate among these claims in favour of their love. They do not marry in blind and iconoclastic passion but with awareness, after consideration, and with informed resolution. The tension between the individual will and the social conscience is not violated by their marriage: those and that which they oppose and offend are shown to be decadent and ossified, their pride and their prejudice directed towards the propagation of what itself atrophies and suffocates, what withers life. In contrast, the marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth is an assertion of life, a vital and flexible response to the compromise of living. Neither Darcy nor Elizabeth is blind to the disagreeable appurtenances to their marriage, but what they incur pales beside what they gain. Their marriage, if you will, anticipates the Victorian social compromise, but, at bottom, this capacity for judicious compromise is what marks and makes for wholeness of life.

When Darcy first sees Elizabeth at the initial ball, it may seem that he judges her for herself and finds her wanting:

> He looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt <u>me</u>; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me." (11-12)

But Darcy's judgement is not a coolly objective evaluation of Elizabeth's personal attractiveness; his reaction is shaped by an idea of himself and what he is, and by an idea of the society in which, without any real inclination, he finds himself. These ideas are not wholly without substance and value, but what is just in them is contaminated by what is deterministic and prejudiced. While he is never so rigidly autocratic as Lady Catherine, Darcy's freedom of response to individuals and to experience is severely restricted by a too easy and too general criterion for the allocation of merit and inferiority. At this point, his general, social judgements are facile, and he is not prepared to appraise individuals through personal acquaintance, the more arduous but only valid process of evaluation. As he later tells Elizabeth, Darcy is ill-at-ease in this society, and his discomfort engenders behaviour which may seem the result of inflexible pride. The acidity of his remark to Bingley achieves what is, perhaps, its primary object: it cuts short Bingley's efforts at persuasion. Darcy's apparent pride is, in part, the consequence of a fear of exposing himself where he feels no certainty of pleasure nor of mutual consideration, of tarnishing his dignity. This is some mitigation, but it is not excuse. At Rosings, Elizabeth is little disposed to admit Darcy's explanation of his conduct:

> "Perhaps," said Darcy, "I should have judged better, had I sought an introduction, but I am ill qualified to recommend myself to strangers."

. . . . . .

"I certainly have not the talent which some people possess," said Darcy, "of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done."

"My fingers," said Elizabeth, "do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault -- because I would not take the trouble of practising. It is not that I do not believe my fingers as capable as any other woman's of superior execution." (175)

The behaviour of Darcy's sister throws light on his conduct, and suggests his not unlikely embarrassment in face of the socially unfamiliar.

Since her being at Lambton, she had heard that Miss Darcy was exceedingly proud; but the observation of a very few minutes convinced her, that she was only exceedingly shy. (261)

Georgiana's reception of them was very civil; but attended with all that embarrassment which, though proceeding from shyness and the fear of doing wrong, would easily give to those who felt themselves inferior, the belief of her being proud and reserved. (267)

Although she by no means suggests an equal social trepidation in Darcy, by showing such behaviour in his sister and pointing out its liability to misinterpretation, Jane Austen hints that Darcy, too, has been judged over severely. Even at Rosings, she makes it clear through Colonel Fitzwilliam that Darcy is uncomfortable and behaving oddly.

Mrs. Collins knew not what to make of him. Colonel Fitzwilliam's occasionally laughing at his stupidity, proved that he was generally different, which her own knowledge of him could not have told her. (180)

Elizabeth's opinion of Darcy at this point, however, is at its lowest. His first comment that she is only

'tolerable' can hardly dispose her in his favour. And though she affects to treat his hauteur as a joke, she herself judges him hastily and socially by attributing to him the full snobbery and empty arrogance that his behaviour might suggest. Charlotte suggests to her that there is some justification for Darcy's pride:

> "His pride," said Miss Lucas, "does not offend <u>me</u> so much as pride often does, because there is an excuse for it. One cannot wonder that so very fine a young man, with family, fortune, every thing in his favour, should think highly of himself. If I may so express it, he has a <u>right</u> to be proud."
> "That is very true," replied Elizabeth, "and I could easily forgive <u>his</u> pride, if he had not mortified <u>mine</u>." (20)

And her willingness to hear and accept things to Darcy's discredit clouds her awareness that Wickham, while protesting reluctance to 'expose' Darcy from respect for his father and family name, proceeds to give a damning account of Darcy's conduct to someone he has only just met. Wickham's assumption of deep respect for his own father and for Darcy's, and his indictment of Darcy as abusing his father's wishes, are powerful factors in Elizabeth's satisfaction that her approval of Wickham and disgust with Darcy are just.

> "His behaviour to myself has been scandalous; but I verily believe I could forgive him any thing and every thing, rather than his disappointing the hopes and disgracing the memory of his father." (78)

Darcy himself has a word for this kind of talk: it is, at best, the 'indirect boast'. Elizabeth overlooks the evident disparity between what Wickham professes and the attack he makes on every living Darcy of whom he speaks. She does

not consider that, from Wickham's account, the only good Darcy is a dead Darcy. When Mr. Darcy's 'true' character is opened to Jane there is more good sense because less eagerness to find fault in her reaction:

"Laugh as much as you chuse, but you will not laugh me out of my opinion. My dearest Lizzy, do but consider in what a disgraceful light it places Mr. Darcy, to be treating his father's favourite in such a manner, -- one, whom his father had promised to provide for. -- It is impossible. No man of common humanity, no man who had any value for his character, could be capable of it. Can his most intimate friends be so excessively deceived in him? oh! no." (85)

Elizabeth, lacking in candour here, can treat Jane's defence as only an excess of candour. But her strongest argument in Wickham's favour is, significantly, personal and therefore suspect. "If it be not so, let Mr. Darcy contradict it. Besides, there was truth in his looks" (86).

Elizabeth judges Darcy before she knows him: she damns him as proud, and the pride as vicious, before she understands either the man or the basis of his pride. She congratulates herself on the shrewdness of her response to Darcy, and she goes to Netherfield Ball to observe him demonstrate the proposition she has made about him. Surprised into accepting an offer to dance with Darcy, she retorts to Charlotte's assurance that she will probably find him agreeable,

"Heaven forbid! -- <u>That</u> would be the greatest misfortune of all! -- To find a man agreeable whom one is determined to hate! -- Do not wish me such an evil." (90)

Not only Darcy's own behaviour and opinions but the conduct of those with whom he is acquainted or related

serve to consolidate Elizabeth's judgement of him. Caroline Bingley, whom Elizabeth has good reason to dislike and whose malice is undisguised, defends Darcy against Wickham superciliously and with no real knowledge of the circumstances.

"George Wickham has treated Mr. Darcy in a most infamous manner. I do not know the particulars, but I know very well that Mr. Darcy is not in the least to blame, that he cannot bear to hear George Wickham mentioned, and that though my brother thought he could not well avoid including him in his invitation to the officers, he was excessively glad to find that he had taken himself out of the way. His coming into the country at all, is a most insolent thing indeed, and I wonder how he could presume to do it. I pity you, Miss Eliza, for this discovery of your favourite's guilt; but really considering his descent, one could not expect much better."

"His guilt and his descent appear by your account to be the same," said Elizabeth angrily; "for I have heard you accuse him of nothing worse than of being the son of Mr. Darcy's steward, and <u>of that</u>, I can assure you, he informed me himself."

"I beg your pardon," replied Miss Bingley, turning away with a sneer. "Excuse my interference. -- It was kindly meant." (94-95)

Miss Bingley's justification of Darcy is simply social and it is precisely this abuse of rank and privilege, its gratuitous equation with rectitude and right, that Elizabeth cannot tolerate. And she yokes Darcy himself with his small-minded champion.

Similarly her acquaintance with Lady Catherine de Bourgh seems to confirm Wickham's veracity.

Lady Catherine was a tall, large woman, with strongly marked features, which might once have been handsome. Her air was not conciliating, nor was her manner of receiving them, such as to make her visitors forget their inferior rank. She was not rendered formidable by silence; but whatever she said, was spoken in so authoritative a tone, as marked her self-importance, and brought Mr. Wickham immediately to Elizabeth's mind; and from the observation of the day altogether, she believed Lady Catherine to be exactly what he had represented. (162)

Miss de Bourgh "looks sickly and cross. -- Yes, she will do for him very well. She will make him a very proper wife" (158). Indeed, although Elizabeth easily accepts what Wickham has told her -- that Darcy is to marry his cousin quite dispassionately, by arrangement -- it increases her feelings of contempt for him: this is one sort of family sense that she cannot respect.

To this point, therefore, while Elizabeth believes that Darcy has incriminated himself, she, in fact, judges him largely from others in his circle and from the de Bourgh branch of his family. Elizabeth judges Darcy no more fairly, because clear-sightedly, than Darcy appreciates her independently, and thus truly. Darcy does not realise what Elizabeth means to him because when he thinks of her, he thinks also of Mrs. Bennet, Lydia, Mary, the Phillips, Cheapside, and so on.

Elizabeth's dislike of Darcy is at this moment intensified by Colonel Fitzwilliam's unconscious confirmation of her suspicions of Darcy's responsibility for the separation of Jane and Bingley, and, thus, for having nonchalantly caused such misery to her dearest sister.

> That he had been concerned in the measures taken to separate Mr. Bingley and Jane, she had never doubted; but she had always attributed to Miss Bingley the principal design and arrangement of them. If his own vanity, however, did not mislead him, <u>he</u> was the cause, his pride and caprice were the cause of all that Jane had suffered, and still continued to suffer. He had ruined for a while every hope of happiness for the most affectionate, generous heart in the world; and no one could say how lasting an injury he might have inflicted. (186)

And, with an upsurge of family pride, she reflects angrily on the possible "very strong objections against the lady" to which Colonel Fitzwilliam alludes:

"To Jane herself," she exclaimed, "there could be no possibility of objection. All loveliness and goodness as she is! Her understanding excellent, her mind improved, and her manners captivating. Neither could any thing be urged against my father, who, though with some peculiarities, has abilities which Mr. Darcy himself need not disdain, and respectability which he will probably never reach." When she thought of her mother indeed, her confidence gave way a little, but she would not allow that any objections <u>there</u> had material weight with Mr. Darcy, whose pride, she was convinced, would receive a deeper wound from the want of importance in his friend's connections than from their want of sense; and she was quite decided at last, that he had been partly governed by this worst kind of pride, and partly by the wish of retaining Mr. Bingley for his sister. (186-187)

It is immediately following this that Darcy makes his first proposal to Elizabeth. He asks her to marry him but he emphasises the sacrifices <u>he</u> is making, the obstacles <u>he</u> has surmounted in doing so.

He spoke well, but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority -- of its being a degradation -- of the family obstacles which judgement had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit. (189)

Elizabeth rejects him vehemently.

It is interesting to consider the swing in emphasis between the proposal here and its effect and that in <u>Jane Eyre</u> (pub. 1847). Darcy's proposal details the disadvantages to himself that the marriage is to bring, particularly his objections to Elizabeth's family: he is rejected. Rochester tells Jane, "You -- you strange -- you almost unearthly thing!

-- I love as my own flesh. You -- poor and obscure, and small and plain as you are -- I entreat to accept me as a husband."[4] And when Jane can convince herself that he is sincere, even serious, she accepts him joyfully. The difference in world is great, but the points of similarity and the tendency of Jane Austen's novel suggest important aspects of the later one. The male lover in Jane Austen is, with significant but accountable exceptions, in the tradition of the dominant male. But there is always some sense of personal equality between man and woman, and the male's sexuality is given a moral and intellectual basis. Indeed, the dominant male in Jane Austen is more experienced in the world than the heroine, and his sense of social morality is such that he is able to see beyond an inflexible social code, but to recognise the value and importance of social discipline. The balance between hero and heroine in Jane Austen parallels the balance between society and the individual. In Jane Eyre, the family has faded in significance; its disposition is such that emphasis is thrown fiercely on the individual and his emotions. The novel is structured so as to generate and counterpoint passion. The role of the dominant male is developed fantastically and his dominance is simple masculinity, which for Charlotte Brontë, means force and power, without either moral or intellectual justification.

This first proposal is the high-point of the antagonism between Elizabeth and Darcy: it also marks the beginning of

their new understanding. They communicate with each other: knowledge and personal acquaintance form the basis of meaningful judgement. While Elizabeth cauterises Darcy's confidence here she, nonetheless, makes clear to him the reasons for her antipathy: he has jeopardised Jane's happiness; he has abused his responsibilities to Wickham; and his present behaviour only confirms what she has felt about him "From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, . . . the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others" (193).

Their growth in understanding is remarkable, but inevitable, when Darcy takes the singular step of writing to Elizabeth in explanation of his conduct. This in itself is a real indication of the deep respect and regard he feels for her. His explanation requires that he reveal facts about his family that are obviously painful to relate and which he would wish to keep as secret as possible. Reluctantly at first, Elizabeth has to revise her fundamental assumptions about Darcy, and about Wickham. Darcy, now, speaks with quiet reverence for his father, and with respect for Wickham's, and the sincerity of what he says is marked by the reality of what he does. Wickham's extravagant professions are shown to be worthless; he perfidiously abuses the memory of Darcy's father and of his own. Elizabeth grants that Jane's composure is deceptive, and she must also grant the painful truth of what he says concerning

her family.

"The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father." (198)

Elizabeth now sees that she has blinded herself to probability and inconsistency and thus to truth. She, like Darcy, has an idea of herself: she is the clever daughter of a very clever man. The shock to her pride which the letter brings is salutary because it is heeded and not foolishly resented:

"How despicably have I acted!" she cried. -- "I, who have prided myself on my discernment! -- I, who have valued myself on my abilities! who have so often disdained the generous candour of my sister, and gratified my vanity, in useless or blameable distrust. -- How humiliating is this discovery! -- Yet, how just a humiliation! -- Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly. -- Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself." (208)

Elizabeth learns about herself but she is also brought to accept the full truth about her family. While the family must be loved and rightfully respected, its members must not wilfully blind themselves to its deficiencies. Elizabeth comes painfully to see that not only are her mother and three younger sisters irresponsible and foolish, but that even her beloved and highly respected father, whom she is so close to and in many ways so like, is deeply at fault:

In her own past behaviour, there was a constant source of

vexation and regret; and in the unhappy defects of her family a subject of yet heavier chagrin. They were hopeless of remedy. Her father, contented with laughing at them, would never exert himself to restrain the wild giddiness of his youngest daughters; and her mother, with manners so far from right herself, was insensible of the evil. Elizabeth had frequently united with Jane in an endeavour to check the imprudence of Catherine and Lydia; but while they were supported by their mother's indulgence, what chance could there be of improvement? (212-213)

And, significantly, Darcy is no longer held responsible for Jane's loss of Bingley:

How grievous then was the thought that, of a situation so desirable in every respect, so replete with advantage, so promising for happiness, Jane had been deprived, by the folly and indecorum of her own family! (213)

The shock which Darcy's frank declaration administers clarifies her perspective on her family, but it does not absolutely define it. The recognition he has forced upon her informs her awareness of their faults, but experience finalises the objectivity with which she must view them. On her return to the family circle, she witnesses the absurd rites of grief which attend the news of the soldiers' departure with no apparent hope that the family is to accompany them:

Such were the kind of lamentations resounding perpetually through Longbourn-house. Elizabeth tried to be diverted by them; but all sense of pleasure was lost in shame. She felt anew the justice of Mr. Darcy's objections; and never had she before been so much disposed to pardon his interference in the views of his friend." (229)

In the chapter following Elizabeth's vain attempt to persuade her father that he should not allow Lydia to go to Brighton, her increased awareness of family limitations, especially of the lax irresponsibility of her father, is made clear:

> Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband. She had always seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities, and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible. But she had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages which must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage, nor ever been so fully aware of the evils arising from so ill-judged a direction of talents; talents which rightly used, might at least have preserved the respectability of his daughters, even if incapable of enlarging the mind of his wife. (236-237)

What actually takes place at Brighton exceeds even Elizabeth's worst fears and exposes relentlessly the sickness and instability of their family structure. On hearing the news, Elizabeth exclaims mentally, 'The mischief of neglect and mistaken indulgence towards such a girl. -- Oh! how acutely did she now feel it' (280). And she herself speaks frankly to her uncle of her father's evasion of family responsibility:

> "Lydia has no brothers to step forward; and he [Wickham] might imagine, from my father's behaviour, from his indolence and the little attention he has ever seemed to give to what was going forward in his family, that <u>he</u> would do as little, and think as little about it, as any father could do, in such a matter." (283)

But the heroines in these novels are usually -- the exceptions are Catherine Morland and Emma -- teachers as well as learners, and those whom they teach are, or will be in authority over them. What Elizabeth essentially teaches Darcy is that "Love's not love/When it is mingled with regards that stands/Aloof from th'entire point." He is brought to reassess himself and those around him; he comes to see the failings of those whose authority and

rights he had before unthinkingly accepted, and he achieves a deeper consciousness not only of the actual responsibilities of power, but of the importance of the manner in which those responsibilities are carried out, of the personality of power.

Even before the proposal his sense of the deficiencies of Elizabeth's relations has made him acutely conscious of the ill-breeding of some members of his own family. Lady Catherine de Bourgh condescendingly invites Elizabeth to practise the piano-forté -- in the servants' part of the house.

> "I have told Miss Bennet several times, that she will never play really well, unless she practises more; and though Mrs. Collins has no instrument, she is very welcome, as I have often told her, to come to Rosings every day, and play on the piano-forté in Mrs. Jenkinson's room. She would be in nobody's way, you know, in that part of the house."
> Mr. Darcy looked a little ashamed of his aunt's ill breeding, and made no answer. (173)

And Elizabeth's acrid terseness in informing him that "You are mistaken, Mr. Darcy, if you suppose that the mode of your declaration affected me in any other way, than as it spared me the concern which I might have felt in refusing you, had you behaved in a more gentleman-like manner" jolts Darcy into a new awareness of himself. His sense of rank has never been as dictatorial as Lady Catherine's, but he realises still more keenly the limitations and responsibilities of social status. He sees that he is not a conglomerate of inscrutable distinction but an individual with needs that cannot be satisfied

within himself. His pride is the basis of his goodness, but it is jaundiced in that he feels that his self-respect is enough, that he has no responsibility to justify himself to society. Self-respect is indistinguishable from what Pope means by self-love when he writes 'That true SELF-LOVE and SOCIAL are the same.' Darcy's contempt for social esteem is an indication of a failure in his apprehension of reality, no less of the reality of his own nature than of the conditions of existence. This is a kind of pride whose perversity he must come to see because it springs from an incomplete awareness of the truth that 'man is not . . . a solitary being complete in himself, but only . . . completed in society'.[5] His love for Elizabeth brings him this awareness. When their understanding is complete and she has agreed to marry him, he describes, with the exaggeration of joy, his family background and upbringing and its adverse effects:

"I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child I was taught what was <u>right</u>, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit. Unfortunately an only son, (for many years an only <u>child</u>) I was spoilt by my parents, who though good themselves, (my father particularly, all that was benevolent and amiable,) allowed, encouraged, almost taught me to be selfish and overbearing, to care for none beyond my own family circle, to think meanly of all the rest of the world, to <u>wish</u> at least to think meanly of their sense and worth compared with my own. Such I was, from eight to eight and twenty; and such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You shewed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased." (369)

Darcy is brought to see what is excrescential and damaging in his pride. Elizabeth, herself, comes to understand the basis and therefore the value of Darcy's pride: what it is, and what it means. The letter prepares for this understanding, but it is her visit to Pemberley that shapes her consciousness of what being a Darcy comprehends. At first sight, she is impressed by the simple dignity of the house:

> It was a large, handsome, stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; -- and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal, nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt, that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something! (245)

The housekeeper's account of her master is full of proud respect and warm affection:

> "I have never had a cross word from him in my life, and I have known him ever since he was four years old." (248)
>
> "He is the best landlord, and the best master," said she, "that ever lived. Not like the wild young men now-a-days, who think of nothing but themselves. There is not one of his tenants or servants but what will give him a good name. Some people call him proud; but I am sure I never saw any thing of it. To my fancy, it is only because he does not rattle away like other young men." (249)

Elizabeth's own experience has already taught her of the warm love of Darcy for his sister, and of Georgiana for him; indeed, it was the depth of this affection that saved Georgiana from Wickham. In his letter, Darcy had told Elizabeth that "Georgiana, unable to support the idea

of grieving a brother whom she almost looked up to as a father, acknowledged the whole to me" (202). Mrs. Reynolds is enthusiastic in her praise of Darcy as a brother: "Whatever can give his sister pleasure is sure to be done in a moment. There is nothing he would not do for her" (250). Moreover, Elizabeth can now value this praise justly:

> The commendation bestowed on him my Mrs. Reynolds was of no trifling nature. What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant? As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people's happiness were in his guardianship! -- How much of pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow! -- How much of good or evil must be done by him! (250)

In <u>An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters</u> (1761), Lady Sarah Pennington writes,

> It is only from the less conspicuous scenes of life, the more retired sphere of action, from the artless tenor of domestic conduct, that the real character can, with any cer/tainty, be drawn -- these undisguised, proclaim the man; but, as they shun the glare of light, nor court the noise of popular applause, they pass unnoted -- and are seldom known till after an intimate acquaintance: the best method, therefore, to avoid the deception in this case is, to lay no stress on outward appearances, which are too often fallacious, but to take the rule of judging from the simple unpolished sentiments of those, whose dependent connexions give them an undeniable certainty -- who not only see, but who hourly feel, the good or bad effects of that disposition, to which they are subjected. By this, I mean, that if a man is equally respected, esteemed, and beloved by his tenants, by his dependents and domestics . . . you may justly conclude, he has that true good nature, that real benevolence, which delights in communicating felicity, and enjoys the satisfaction it diffuses.[6]

Darcy meets Elizabeth on his own ground and among his own family, and she is at last able to judge him fairly. He himself <u>seems</u> remarkably changed, but her own later reflection, when she first sees him again after

Pemberley, and he then seems changed, is explanation enough:

> She had ventured only one glance at Darcy. He looked serious as usual; and she thought, more as he had been used to look in Hertfordshire, than as she had seen him at Pemberley. But, perhaps he could not in her mother's presence be what he was before her uncle and aunt. It was a painful, but not an improbable, conjecture. (335)

Darcy's civility to herself and polite enquiries about her family astonish Elizabeth, but nothing intrigues and gratifies her more than the interested affability of his manner to her uncle and aunt:

> That he was surprised by the connexion was evident; he sustained it however with fortitude, and so far from going away, turned back with them, and entered into conversation with Mr. Gardiner. Elizabeth could not but be pleased, could not but triumph. It was consoling, that he should know she had some relations for whom there was no need to blush.
>
> The conversation soon turned upon fishing, and she heard Mr. Darcy invite him, with the greatest civility, to fish there as often as he chose, while he continued in the neighbourhood, offering at the same time to supply him with fishing tackle, and pointing out those parts of the stream where there was usually most sport. (255)

In Volume II, Chapter II, Elizabeth had exclaimed to her aunt,

> "Mr. Darcy may perhaps have heard of such a place as Gracechurch Street, but he would hardly think a month's ablution enough to cleanse him from its impurities, were he once to enter it." (141)

What Darcy will, in fact, do for Elizabeth is made clear only later when he not only enters Gracechurch Street, but scours the most disreputable parts of London in search of Lydia and Wickham. It is appropriate, however, that Darcy should first accept that obstacle which he described as "nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety" displayed by Elizabeth's immediate family. Elizabeth had

judged his objections as mainly social, and she now sees that again she has largely misjudged him.

Nothing could make more clear Darcy's admiration of Elizabeth than his anxious desire to introduce his sister to her.

"There is also one other person in the party," he continued after a pause, "who more particularly wishes to be known to you, -- Will you allow me, or do I ask too much, to introduce my sister to your acquaintance during your stay at Lambton?" (256)

The significance of this is at least equal to that of Henry Tilney's introduction of his sister, Eleanor, to Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey. Georgiana's behaviour indicates how warmly her brother has spoken in Elizabeth's favour; indeed, his eagerness that they be friends intimidates her somewhat:

Miss Darcy, on her brother's entrance, exerted herself much more to talk; and Elizabeth saw that he was anxious for his sister and herself to get acquainted, and forwarded, as much as possible, every attempt at conversation on either side. (269)

As Elizabeth's awareness of Darcy's value to her increases, so her sense of her own family's indiscretions and the justice of Darcy's objections to them grows. The Lydia débâcle convinces her of her true feelings for him, as it ruins, she is conscious, any possibility that Darcy might overcome his legitimate scruples.

Darcy made no answer. He seemed scarcely to hear her, and was walking up and down the room in earnest meditation; his brow contracted, his air gloomy. Elizabeth soon observed, and instantly understood it. Her power was sinking; every thing must sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace. She could neither wonder nor condemn, but the belief of

his self-conquest brought nothing consolatory to her bosom, afforded no palliation to her distress. It was, on the contrary, exactly calculated to make her understand her own wishes; and never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him, as now, when all love must be vain. (278)

Elizabeth's sense of the oppressiveness of her family, of herself as a member of it sharing in its disgrace, is now clear-sighted. The Gardiners themselves have no doubt of the repercussions of Lydia's behaviour:

Though Lydia has never been a favourite with them, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner could not but be deeply affected. Not Lydia only, but all were concerned in it. (280)

Henceforth the action heightens the barriers to Darcy's marriage with Elizabeth. Elizabeth is acutely conscious not merely of the habitual improprieties of her family but now also that the family has offended a cardinal dictum of social morality; further, that in salvaging the remnants of Lydia's 'respectability' a connection has been formed with that person whom Darcy so justly despises.

There seemed a gulf impassable between them. Had Lydia's marriage been concluded on the most honourable terms, it was not to be supposed that Mr. Darcy would connect himself with a family, where to every other objection would now be added, an alliance and relationship of the nearest kind with the man whom he so justly scorned. (311)

She began now to comprehend that he was exactly the man, who, in disposition and talents, would most suit her. His understanding and temper, though unlike her own, would have answered all her wishes. It was an union that must have been to the advantage of both; by her ease and liveliness, his mind might have been softened, his manners improved, and from his judgement, information, and knowledge of the world, she must have received benefit of greater importance. (312)

However, as Mr. Collins' letter of condolence and self-congratulation kindly assures them, Darcy's aunt is quite

certain of even the general repercussions of Lydia's conduct:

"You are grievously to be pitied, in which opinion I am not only joined by Mrs. Collins, but likewise by lady Catherine and her daughter, to whom I have related the affair. They agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter, will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others, for who, as lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family." (297)

And even when Elizabeth has learnt that it is Darcy who is wholly responsible for arranging and financing Lydia's marriage, her overpowering impression is of the insuperable barriers, family and social, and now personal, to a marriage with Darcy.

Brother-in-law of Wickham! Every kind of pride must revolt from the connection. He had to be sure done much. She was ashamed to think how much. But he had given a reason for his interference, which asked no extraordinary stretch of belief. (326)

The reason that Darcy gave was this:

". . . his conviction of its being owing to himself that Wickham's worthlessness had not been so well known, as to make it impossible for any young woman of character, to love or confide in him. He generously imputed the whole to his mistaken pride, and confessed that he had before thought it beneath him, to lay his private actions open to the world. His character was to speak for itself. He called it, therefore, his duty to step forward, and endeavour to remedy an evil, which had been brought on by himself." (321-322)

That Elizabeth can accept Darcy's sense of mistaken pride as, indeed, sufficient motive for him to act as he has, is no trifling indication of her increased knowledge and value of him, her sense of what his real pride is. For she is under no illusions about what Darcy, the man she said would hardly think a month's ablution enough to cleanse himself from the impurities of Gracechurch Street, has done.

He had followed them purposely to town, he had taken on himself all the trouble and mortification attendant on such a research; in which supplication had been necessary to a woman whom he must abominate and despise, and where he was reduced to meet, frequently meet, reason with, persuade, and finally bribe, the man whom he always wished most to avoid, and whose very name it was punishment to him to pronounce. He had done all this for a girl whom he could neither regard nor esteem. (326)

The exorcism or purgation of Darcy's improper pride, his growth in self-knowledge through his love for Elizabeth, is unquestionable. And Elizabeth's growing apprehension of Darcy himself, and of his pride, her own growth in self and family knowledge, can be vividly expressed by juxtaposing a few brief quotations. Her first impression of him is, in more apparently reasonable terms, hardly less severe than this of the neighbourhood as a whole:

He was the proudest, most disagreeable man in the world. (11)

After his first proposal she reflects:

His pride, his abominable pride, his shameless avowal of what he had done with respect to Jane, his unpardonable assurance in acknowledging, though he could not justify it. (193)

And, as quoted above:

Brother-in-law of Wickham! Every kind of pride must revolt from the connection. (297)

By the process of events and increase in knowledge, Elizabeth has become Darcy's champion. His pride, now properly understood and felt, is a source of deep pride in her:

They owed the restoration of Lydia, her character, every thing to him. Oh! how heartily did she grieve over every

ungracious sensation she had ever encouraged, every saucy speech she had ever directed towards him. For herself she was humbled; but she was proud of him. (326-327)

The climax of this movement and, I think, one of the most moving moments in literature, occurs when Elizabeth faces her father whom Darcy has just told of Elizabeth's consent to marry him.

Her father was walking about the room, looking grave and anxious. "Lizzy," said he, "what are you doing? Are you out of your senses, to be accepting this man? Have you not always hated him?"

. . . . . .

"Have you any other objection," said Elizabeth, "than your belief of my indifference?"

"None at all. We all know him to be a proud, unpleasant sort of man; but this would be nothing if you really liked him."

"I do, I do like him," she replied, with tears in her eyes, "I love him. Indeed he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable. You do not know what he really is; then pray do not pain me by speaking of him in such terms." (376)

Elizabeth's affirmation of love for Darcy is made to her father. Darcy, of course, makes his to her. In his second proposal, he gives consummatory expression to the perspective he has achieved on Elizabeth, and through her on himself. He sees that the individual is finally greater than the family; that the family is an expression of the individual, as he is of it; but that ultimately the family is less than the individual. He began by seeing Elizabeth in social terms, in terms of her family, he now sees her in true perspective. Ironically, it is now Elizabeth who seeks to efface herself and to exalt the family. She tells Darcy,

"Let me thank you again and again, in the name of all my

family, for that generous compassion which induced you to take so much trouble, and bear so many mortifications, for the sake of discovering them."

But Darcy insists:

"If you will thank me," he replied, "let it be for yourself alone. That the wish of giving happiness to you, might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny. But your family owe me nothing. Much as I respect them, I believe, I thought only of you." (366)

This then is the end for Darcy and Elizabeth -- the happiest, wisest, most reasonable end. It has been achieved by a growth in the clear-sighted recognition by each of the other, and by the placement of the family. Appropriately what Darcy rejects and what Elizabeth contemns is finally responsible for bringing them together. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, mistakenly hearing of a proposed marriage between Darcy and Elizabeth, imperiously enters Longbourn and commands Elizabeth that no such marriage can take place. Lady Catherine speaks:

"I will not be interrupted. Hear me in silence. My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. They are descended on the maternal side, from the same noble line; and, on the father's, from respectable, honourable, and ancient, though untitled families. Their fortune on both sides is splendid. They are destined for each other by the voice of every member of their respective houses; and what is to divide them? The upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune. Is this to be endured! But it must not, shall not be. If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit the sphere, in which you have been brought up."

Elizabeth answers her simply, but with pride.

"In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far we are equal." (356)

And the climax of Lady Catherine's outraged declaration

for family as class,

"I am no stranger to the particulars of your younger sister's infamous elopement. I know it all; that the young man's marrying her was a patched-up business, at the expence of your father and uncles. And is <u>such</u> a girl to be my nephew's sister? Is <u>her</u> husband, is the son of his late father's steward, to be his brother? Heaven and earth! -- of what are you thinking? Are the shades of Pemberley to be thus polluted?" (357)

is countered by Elizabeth's declaration for responsible individualism, the complement of Darcy's affirmation to her,

"Neither duty, nor honour, nor gratitude," replied Elizabeth, "have any possible claim on me, in the present instance. No principle of either, would be violated by my marriage with Mr. Darcy. And with regard to the resentment of his family, or the indignation of the world, if the former <u>were</u> excited by his marrying me, it would not give me one moment's concern -- and the world in general would have too much sense to join in the scorn." (358)

Lady Catherine is undoubtedly the most obnoxious and ill-bred person in the book, more vulgar and more vicious than any single Bennet. The concessions and the tolerance by the lovers are, thus, to a great extent balanced. Darcy's acceptance of Elizabeth and her family is signalised by his seeking Elizabeth out at Longbourn, and by his entering her home for the first time and dining -- he even sits next to Mrs. Bennet -- with her family. Moreover, the engagement of Bingley to Jane, while it formally demolishes another of the charges that Elizabeth brought against Darcy at the first proposal, also signifies the dissociation of Darcy from that social imperiousness of which his aunt is a grotesque. With no matter what good intentions, Darcy has no right to manipulate the life of

another: Bingley is granted what is his right: the freedom and the responsibility to act for himself, a freedom and a responsibility that Darcy now requires for himself, and in granting them to Bingley, he clears the way for him to grant them to himself.

Darcy now accepts Elizabeth's family because he must take Elizabeth: clear-sighted, rational love enables the individual to encounter, to impose his own order upon, and therefore to transcend the familial and the social. Neither family nor society is rejected, but the perspective that Darcy and Elizabeth have attained allows them to discriminate between what is essential in these institutions and what is excrescent, sick and sickening. The marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth is an assertion of life, of harmony and stability.

Invariably in Jane Austen, the emerging heroine leaves the oppressive and diseased or defunct family circle if she does not herself restore it to health. In Pride and Prejudice, it is obvious that Elizabeth and Jane are alien to Longbourn. At the close they both leave it. Darcy himself expresses this sense that Longbourn is not Elizabeth's proper sphere during her visit to Rosings:

"You cannot have a right to such very strong local attachment. You cannot have been always at Longbourn." (179)

And despite Lady Catherine's vicious, because so frightened, decree that Elizabeth stagnate at Longbourn, Pemberley becomes that proper sphere.

> Elizabeth did all she could to shield him . . . and was ever anxious to keep him to herself, and to those of her family with whom he might converse without mortification; and though the uncomfortable feelings arising from all this took from the season of courtship much of its pleasure, it added to the hope of the future; and she looked forward with delight to the time when they should be removed from society so little pleasing to either, to all the comfort and elegance of their family party at Pemberley. (384)

IV

"THE QUALITY OF NOTHING"

> Pride is a certain response made from the depths of my being to an investiture of which it behoves me to prove myself worthy. Such pride is experienced on my own account. It in no way aims at impressing some other person with the awe and fear which would flatter me. Thus it is a constructive sentiment, helping to give me inner foundations on which to establish my conduct. Vanity, on the other hand, by the very fact that it is turned outwards towards the rest of the world, is essentially sterile, or even, in the last analysis, disintegrating.[1]

Gabriel Marcel made this distinction in a lecture, 'The Mystery of the Family', given to L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Familiales in 1942. Early in Pride and Prejudice Darcy states "vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride -- where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will always be under good regulation" (P.P., 57). And Elizabeth, very much later, protests of Darcy to her father "he has no improper pride. He is perfectly amiable" (P.P., 376). Both Darcy and Elizabeth are proud, throughout the novel and at its close. Their pride is at once personal, familial, and social. And it is this pride which is the basis of their integrity and happiness in all these spheres. Pride is necessary to give significance: it informs not merely rank and dues, privilege and prerogative, but what these entail -- pride in status for Darcy and Elizabeth is pride in function. Pride is incentive; without it, virtue and

right action are impossible. On a personal level, these two assert not just the rights of the individual and the privileges that social life confers upon him; they accept also the responsibilities of the individual to his society -- its rights. Moreover, Darcy's deep pride in his family and in its traditions is valuable and valid because he is aware of and submissive to the duties of privilege. Elizabeth's understanding of Darcy and his pride is inseparable from her understanding of what his family has been, and is in him, and, when she becomes his wife, in her also.

In contrast, the family pride of Lady Catherine de Bourgh is simply pride in rank and rights, and in the maintenance and perpetuation of inalienable and unquestionable privilege. Herself socially privileged, she acknowledges and asserts a social stereotype, and it is the one responsibility of her family members to act in preservation of social stagnation. Her pride is self-regarding in a very different sense from that of Darcy and Elizabeth: it is precisely the vanity of which Marcel speaks.

Sir Thomas Bertram in Mansfield Park has an idea of what Mansfield Park is, and what his family should be. When it is determined that Fanny Price be brought from Portsmouth to Mansfield, he thoughtfully observes to Mrs. Norris,

> "There will be some difficulty in our way, Mrs. Norris . . . as to the distinction proper to be made between the girls as they grow up; how to preserve in the minds of my daughters the consciousness of what they are, without making them think too lowly of their cousin; and how, without

depressing her spirits too far, to make her remember that she is not a Miss Bertram. I should wish to see them very good friends, and would, on no account, authorize in my girls the smallest degree of arrogance towards their relation; but still they cannot be equals. Their rank, fortune, rights, and expectations, will always be different. It is a point of great delicacy, and you must assist us in our endeavours to choose exactly the right line of conduct."

Mrs. Norris was quite at his service; and though she perfectly agreed with him as to its being a most difficult thing, encouraged him to hope that between them it would be easily managed. (M.P., 10-11)

Sir Thomas may sound officious, if not snobbish, here, particularly in contrast with the compliant affability of Mrs. Norris. In fact, his dignified circumspection indicates an awareness of responsibility; Mrs. Norris' easy confidence is a sign of her own irresponsibility, which is confirmed not merely by her actual absolute inattention to the problem Sir Thomas now expresses, but in her refusal to accept any material responsibility for Fanny throughout the novel.

Although Sir Thomas may seem here to stress the rights of being a Bertram, he is equally conscious that these rights are only legitimate as they co-exist and manifest themselves in the fulfilment of duties. But Mrs. Norris, to whom Sir Thomas largely commits the moral care of his daughters, is conscious only of the privilege of rank. She is deferential to the idea of a great family but her deference results in an extravagant stoking of the Miss Bertrams' sense of status, of the consideration to which they feel they are entitled, and the privilege which they regard as their due, without any complementary reference to their duties. For Mrs. Norris the problem to which Sir

Thomas alludes is no problem -- Maria and Julia are inevitably superior in all things to Fanny, and their superiority must be recognized and rewarded. Jane Austen makes quite clear the instability and dangers of this family where Mrs. Norris is a major influence and where Sir Thomas' stern authoritarianism encourages in his daughters an elegance and gracefulness of manner in his presence, which gratifies him and which, they have learnt, apparently satisfies his notions of their accomplished development. But this is tributary conduct, paid for convenience, and from fear: it discharges his daughters' sense of their obligations to him and itself justifies their indulgence and self-assertion in all other things. Mrs. Norris replies to their contemptuous amazement at Fanny's lack of book-learning and want of formal accomplishment, and their conclusion that she is "so odd and so stupid":

"To be sure, my dear, that is very stupid indeed, and shows a great want of genius and emulation. But all things considered, I do not know whether it is not as well that it should be so, for, though you know (owing to me) your papa and mamma are so good as to bring her up with you, it is not at all necessary that she should be as accomplished as you are; -- on the contrary, it is much more desirable that there should be a difference." (M.P., 19)

Jane Austen comments,

Such were the counsels by which Mrs. Norris assisted to form her nieces' minds; and it is not very wonderful that with all their promising talents and early information, they should be entirely deficient in the less common acquirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility. In every thing but disposition, they were admirably taught. Sir Thomas did not know what was wanting, because, though a truly anxious father, he was not outwardly affectionate, and the reserve of his manner repressed all the flow of their spirits before him.

To the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had not time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter, when it did not put herself to inconvenience, guided in every thing important by Sir Thomas, and in smaller concerns by her sister. (M.P., 19-20)

Not surprisingly, the Bertram girls become sybarites in their regard for status without function. For them Mansfield Park is an expression of the esteem and consideration to which they are entitled.

Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot are in this fortunate line of hereditary excellence, and of a personal magnificence and superiority that are more or less occult. The Elliots are, in fact, culminant. The Baronetage is the source and continuing sanction of Sir Walter's noble and scrupulously regulated existence.

SIR Walter Elliot, of Kellynch-hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt, as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last century -- and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest that never failed. (P., 3)

But Sir Walter has no pride:

Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot's character; vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women could think more of their personal appearance than he did; nor could the valet of any new made lord be more delighted with the place he held in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter

Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion. (4)

Sir Walter Elliot is a widower. His wife, Lady Elliot, who has been dead thirteen years, left three daughters to Sir Walter's care and Jane Austen is unambiguous about the adequacy, let alone excellence, of Sir Walter as father and sole responsible parent.

His good looks and his rank had one fair claim on his attachment; since to them he must have owed a wife of very superior character to any thing deserved by his own. Lady Elliot had been an excellent woman, sensible and amiable; whose judgement and conduct, if they might be pardoned the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot, had never required indulgence afterwards. -- She had humoured, or softened, or concealed his failings, and promoted his real respectability for seventeen years; and though not the very happiest being in the world herself, had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children, to attach her to life, and make it no matter of indifference to her when she was called on to quit them. -- Three girls, the two eldest sixteen and fourteen, was an awful legacy for a mother to bequeath; an awful charge rather, to confide to the authority and guidance of a conceited, silly father. (4-5)

Since his wife's death Sir Walter has remained unmarried.

Sir Walter's continuing in singleness requires explanation. -- Be it known then, that Sir Walter, like a good father, (having met with one or two private disappointments in very unreasonable applications) prided himself on remaining single for his dear daughter's sake. (5)

This daughter -- Sir Walter effectively always thinks of the one daughter -- is Elizabeth, his eldest and favourite.

For one daughter, his eldest, he would really have given up any thing, which he had not been very much tempted to do. Elizabeth had succeeded, at sixteen, to all that was possible, of her mother's rights and consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily. (5)

Elizabeth shares Sir Walter's response to life and bases her own incontestable eminence on the same foundations.

For them both, rank and appearance are all, ceremony and show the sum and end of existence. Their judgements are all external and deterministic: one's excellence is defined by one's social standing and by one's personal appearance. The almost total preoccupation of Sir Walter and Elizabeth with themselves and with each other is based upon mutual congratulation and satisfaction. Their perspective on life is, in essentials, identical; Elizabeth automatically claims Sir Walter's attention by her position in the family hierarchy -- an eminence which is confirmed for her father by the superiority of her personal attractions. She carries all his hopes for the family future:

> All equality of alliance must rest with Elizabeth; for Mary had merely connected herself with an old country family of respectability and large fortune, and had therefore <u>given</u> all the honour, and received none: Elizabeth would, one day or other, marry suitably.
>
> It sometimes happens, that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine that she was ten years before; and, generally speaking, if there has been neither ill health nor anxiety, it is a time of life at which scarcely any charm is lost. It was so with Elizabeth; still the same handsome Miss Elliot that she had begun to be thirteen years ago; and Sir Walter might be excused, therefore, in forgetting her age, or, at least, be deemed only half a fool, for thinking himself and Elizabeth as blooming as ever, amidst the wreck of the good looks of every body else; for he could plainly see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintance were growing. (6)

Mary, Sir Walter's youngest daughter, has married, sufficiently well to command acknowledgement but not so well as to enhance or equal the Elliot distincition. She has absorbed the Elliot pride, and seeks to use her family's rank relentlessly and petulantly to gain the recognition

and compliments she does not personally merit. But she lacks the cold haughtiness and icy deportment of the father and eldest daughter. In any case she is a great disappointment in appearance. And in marrying, and that slightly beneath rather than above herself, she has terminated all significant family interest in herself, her affairs, and her new connections.

The third daughter, Anne, is nothing, even in comparison with Mary.

> His two other children were of very inferior value. Mary had acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs. Charles Musgrove; but Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of character, which must have placed her high with any people of real understanding, was nobody with either father or sister: her word had no weight; her convenience was only to give way; -- she was only Anne. (5)

Anne's insignificance is confirmed for Sir Walter, whose standard of perfection is himself, because she is totally unlike him. Even at the height of her personal attractiveness, Anne was for him only tolerable: now Anne is 'haggard'.

> A few years before, Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her bloom had vanished early; and as even in its height, her father had found little to admire in her, (so totally different were her delicate features and mild dark eyes from his own); there could be nothing in them now that she was faded and thin, to excite his esteem. He had never indulged much hope, he had now none, of ever reading her name in any other page of his favourite work. (6)

Anne is summarily considered and dismissed as beneath Sir Walter's notice: she is only Anne.

Elizabeth is clearly of the Sir Walter Elliot branch of the family tree; Anne is most like her mother.

Lady Russell, her mother's closest friend, and the person upon whose 'kindness and advice, Lady Elliot mainly relied for the best help and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had been anxiously giving her daughters' (5), is the one person who truly loves and values Anne:

> To Lady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued god-daughter, favourite and friend. Lady Russell loved them all; but it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to revive again. (6)

While Elizabeth succeeds to the rights and consequence of a Lady Elliot, Anne, as far as is possible for one who is unregarded and unheeded, seeks to fulfil the responsibilities her mother had carried as female head of an ancient landed family and to maintain what little true family respectability and dignity she can. Elizabeth's apprehension of the function and implications of her position in the family is stated in the description of her thirteen years in office:

> Thirteen years had seen her mistress of Kellynch Hall, presiding and directing with a self-possession and decision which could never have given the idea of her being younger than she was. For thirteen years had she been doing the honours, and laying down the domestic law at home, and leading the way to the chaise and four, and walking immediately after Lady Russell out of all the drawing-rooms and dining-rooms in the country. Thirteen winters' revolving frosts had seen her opening every ball of credit which a scanty neighbourhood afforded; and thirteen springs shown their blossoms, as she travelled up to London with her father, for a few weeks annual enjoyment of the great world. (6-7)

And when the economic necessities of her father's and her own extravagant way of living are forced upon them,

Elizabeth's sense of what their position and dignity demand permits her to suggest the following points of economy:

To cut off some unnecessary charities, and to refrain from new-furnishing the drawing-room; to which expedients she afterwards added the happy thought of their taking no present down to Anne, as had been the usual yearly custom. (9-10)

Anne's reaction to the problem of retrenchment when, at length, through Lady Russell, she hears about the family debts and economic danger, is shaped by very different criteria, by a very different sense of what their dignity requires, of what is due to their family tradition and name:

Every emendation of Anne's had been on the side of honesty against importance. She wanted more vigorous measures, a more complete reformation, a quicker release from debt, a much higher tone of indifference for every thing but justice and equity. (12)

Lady Russell, herself the widow of only a knight, has great deference for rank, and a keen sense of what is due to it, but she comes to agree with Anne:

"We must be serious and decided -- for, after all, the person who has contracted debts must pay them; and though a great deal is due to the feelings of the gentleman, and the head of a house, like your father, there is still more due to the character of an honest man."
This was the principle on which Anne wanted her father to be proceeding, his friends to be urging him. She considered it as an act of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors, with all the expedition which the most comprehensive retrenchments could secure, and saw no dignity in any thing short of it. She wanted it to be prescribed, and felt as a duty. (12-13)

But less stringent restrictions than those formulated by Anne arouse the Elliots' horror, and indicate clearly that they and Anne have incompatible interests and anti-

thetical natures.

> How Anne's more rigid requisitions might have been taken, is of little consequence. Lady Russell's had no success at all -- could not be put up with -- were not to be borne. "What! Every comfort of life knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses, table, -- contractions and restrictions every where. To live no longer with the decencies even of a private gentleman! No, he would sooner quit Kellynch-hall at once, than remain in it on such disgraceful terms." (13)

This antithesis between Anne and the other members of her family forms the basis of the familial structure of the novel. Its effects are percurrent. For example, while Anne is staying at Kellynch Lodge waiting to leave for Bath, we are told incidentally, in contrast to Elizabeth's retrenchment on charities, of 'Anne ['s] return from any stroll of solitary indulgence in her father's grounds, or any visit of charity in the village' (133).

Anne's quiet certainty of what the family ought to be contrasts strongly with the Elliots' florid justification of their ostentation and frippery by reference to what their position demands. Sir Walter is unaware of the laughable paradoxes upon which his existence is built. He is living in the past in so far as the justification of his status and magnificence is family history and tradition, yet his happiness depends upon a freezing of his time in a permanent present, and all his efforts are directed to this end: the inferior glories of others may be subject to the ravages of time but the splendours of a Sir Walter Elliot shall not fade with age. Moreover, his contentment is fixed in the immediacy of sensual gratification, the

delight of conceit in oleaginous flattery, or, as Swift would have it, in 'tickling', Sir Walter's happiness is undoubtedly '<u>a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived</u>.'[2] Kellynch Hall is for Sir Walter a solid expression of the personal consideration it is his duty to demand and of the ceremoniousness with which he must behave. However, a decision between Kellynch Hall itself and what he considers it to be the justification of is not a particularly arduous one for Sir Walter. He quits Kellynch Hall for Bath, his ancestral home for lodgings with no apparent sense of any loss in dignity, of any degradation of the family standing. Sir Walter has no feeling for what the house is, and what it represents: Anne has. The Crofts are to occupy the house at Michaelmas, while Anne is staying with Mary at Uppercross.

> Michaelmas came; and now Anne's heart must be in Kellynch again. A beloved home made over to others; all the precious rooms and furniture, groves, and prospects, beginning to own other eyes and other limbs! She could not think of much else on the 29th of September; and she had this sympathetic touch in the evening, from Mary, who, on having occasion to note down the day of the month, exclaimed, "Dear me! is not this the day the Crofts were to come to Kellynch? I am glad I did not think of it before. How low it makes me!" (47-48)

Mary, a lesser Elliot, is useful in revealing the Elliot assumptions, and in allowing Anne to reveal her own nature. On Anne's arrival at Uppercross Cottage, Mary petulantly reproaches her for not coming to be of use to her at the cottage sooner. Anne can have, of course, no demands on her time at Kellynch, and her personal

consideration and comfort are of no consequence beside Mary's claims. Anne explains what she has been doing. While Elizabeth and Sir Walter have been ensuring and enjoying the dignity and pomp of their departure and of their journey to Bath, Anne has been preparing family records, attending to domestic duties, and fulfilling the responsibilities and courtesies of a landed family:

"You must be aware that my wish would be to remain with Lady Russell to the last: and besides what I felt on her account, I have really been so busy, and have had so much to do, that I could not very conveniently have left Kellynch sooner."

"Dear me! what can <u>you</u> possibly have to do?"

"A great many things, I assure you. More than I can recollect in a moment: but I can tell you some. I have been making a duplicate of the catalogue of my father's books and pictures. I have been several times in the garden with Mackenzie, trying to understand, and make him understand, which of Elizabeth's plants are for Lady Russell. I have had all my own little concerns to arrange -- books and music to divide, and all my trunks to repack, from not having understood in time what was intended as to the waggons. And one thing I have had to do, Mary, of a more trying nature; going to almost every house in the parish, as a sort of take-leave. I was told that they wished it. But all these things took up a great deal of time." (38-39)

It is always Anne's lot to perform the essential but unglamorous and demanding domestic tasks and responsibilities -- the things that Sir Walter and Elizabeth, if they ever thought of them, would think beneath their dignity. But these duties, like their doer, very rarely offend their awareness.

Anne Elliot is one of Jane Austen's suffering heroines. But her suffering and loneliness are unique and particularly poignant. Elinor Dashwood suffers and is

isolated in her suffering from a family whose members she loves and by whom she is herself dearly loved. A great part of what Elinor has to endure is caused by special temporary circumstances and conditions which dictate that she suffer alone and which lead to an intensification of her distress through family misunderstanding of her situation and behaviour. Nonetheless throughout the novel she has the knowledge and satisfaction that she is one of a family where she is loved and respected, and where she can herself love and respect. The happy resolution and fulfilment of her love for Edward is accompanied by the clarification and reassertion of the harmony of her own family unit.

In Mansfield Park Fanny Price is immediately removed from her own family, where, because of sheer numbers, because of economic distress, and because of the coarseness and vulgarity of her parents, she could never meaningfully assert herself, never develop the potential of her own nature, to the Bertram family circle at Mansfield Park. She arrives here insignificant, inferior, lonely, frightened, and timid. She is looked upon with contempt by the Bertram girls, is ill-treated and tormented by Mrs. Norris, who continually emphasises for her that she is and must remain inferior, that she will always be the poor relation. But Fanny, more than Maria and Julia Bertram, comes to feel what Mansfield Park is and what the Bertram family should be. She recognizes and respects the

traditions of this great family with an awareness equal to Sir Thomas Bertram's own. The overall movement of Mansfield Park is of opposed rise and fall. Fanny arrives at Mansfield an outsider, ends as its embodiment and future. Her antithesis is Mrs. Norris, whose zenith is reached when she is left by Sir Thomas as his representative at Mansfield. From Sir Thomas' return, his judgement of her worth and his dependence on her influence gradually lessen until she is finally expelled from Mansfield Park. And, ironically, it is not she who asserts Sir Thomas' values during his absence: however reluctantly and shyly she does so, it is Fanny Price, thus appropriately prefiguring and vindicating her final establishment as potential heir at Mansfield and the expression of its ethos. Fanny's comic apotheosis is thus made in the personal and in the family sphere. She proves herself the truly worthy inheritor at Mansfield, but for her to do so Mansfield and its traditions must be themselves valuable.

Fanny Price, then, arrives in a family, not her own immediate family, where she is nothing, where she is lonely and isolated, but where she herself finally becomes the expression of the family's true nature and its future. In her own family, at the beginning of Persuasion, Anne Elliot is nothing; she is insignificant, unregarded and unvalued. But the potential tragedy of Anne's situation is that her family can never, essentially, be more than nothing to her. She can never achieve her fulfilment,

realise her potential within it; she can never define the fullness of her nature in relation to the members of her own family. Anne is valueless within this family because the criteria and attitudes of its members are themselves worthless. The family structure, and its foundations, are sterile and disintegrating. Its representatives are garish clay effigies, hollow and insubstantial, its traditions have already become dust, its family seat a rented lodging house in Bath. Anne can have no natural affinity, no inner sympathy and kinship, with the values of Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot. While she feels, as far as she can, the regard and respect of a daughter for a father for Sir Walter, and of a sister for a sister for Elizabeth, she cannot love and respect them for themselves, as individuals. The posturing pride, the condescending conceit, the smug complacency, the arrogant self-esteem, their high value of the Elliot connection -- all this is vanity to Anne: for her, all this, now, is nothing.

Persuasion is different from Jane Austen's earlier novels in that its heroine is herself fully mature and her maturity proven at the novel's beginning. Jane Austen described her heroine as 'almost too good for me.'[3] Anne Elliot has herself nothing to learn as respects her character. Her maturity is the consequence of her good heart and good sense, and of the years of enforced suffering and self-denial she has experienced. We learn

of the process of her formation through retrospection, but the novel is essentially concerned with the future through the present and the past. Persuasion presents the provision of that essential context within which the fully matured individual can achieve meaningful, and therfore happy, life. Anne Elliot is a mature woman, and the basis of her maturity is emotional intelligence. But she is not happy; her life is incomplete and personally purposeless: what purpose it has is ephemeral and inevitably selfless, is given by others to whom Anne is of use in furthering their desires, to whom she is, finally, of value as a convenience. Anne is a mature social being without a fit, discriminating society. And, as I have indicated, Anne's fulfilment and happiness can never be realised within her own family, where there is a fundamental antagonism, a natural discord and antipathy with no possibility of harmony. Yet, at the novel's opening, Anne seems doomed to stagnate and moulder in this wretched milieu.

Over seven years before, she met, fell in love with, and became engaged to Captain Frederick Wentworth, a naval officer. But her choice met with family disapproval and, still more seriously, with the disapproval of Lady Russell, who fills for Anne the place of her mother. Lady Russell's reaction to the proposed marriage had been this:

> Anne Elliot, with all her charms of birth, beauty, and mind, to throw herself away at nineteen; involve herself at nineteen in an engagement with a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most uncertain profession,

and no connexions to secure even his farther rise in that profession; would be, indeed, a throwing away which she grieved to think of! Anne Elliot, so young; known to so few, to be snatched off by a stranger without alliance or fortune; or rather sunk by him into a state of most wearing, anxious, youth-killing dependence! It must not be, if by any fair interference of friendship, any representations from one who had almost a mother's love, and mother's rights, it would be prevented. (26-27)

And the consequence of Lady Russell's interference and of her powers of persuasion had been the rupture of the engagement:

Such opposition, as these feelings produced, was more than Anne could combat. Young and gentle as she was, it might yet have been possible to withstand her father's ill-will, though unsoftened by one kind word or look on the part of her sister; -- but Lady Russell, whom she had always loved and relied on, could not, with such steadiness of opinion, and such tenderness of manner, be continually advising her in vain. She was persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing -- indiscreet, improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it. (27)

But Anne's action was far from being the consequence of a self-regarding prudence: her primary motive was a conviction that the engagement was to Frederick Wentworth's personal disadvantage.

But it was not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up. -- The belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for <u>his</u> advantage, was her chief consolation, under the misery of a parting -- a final parting; and every consolation was required, for she had to encounter all the additional pain of opinions, on his side, totally unconvinced and unbending; and of his feeling himself ill-used by so forced a relinquishment. -- He left the country in consequence. (27-28)

After more than seven years, Anne still loves Wentworth, now successful professionally, and her emotional commitment to him is firm, unshakeable, so that

she cannot envisage an equal happiness with any other man. Nonetheless, while Anne regrets the break with Wentworth, her regret does not lead to recrimination, either of Lady Russell or of herself:

> Anne, at seven and twenty, thought very differently from what she had been made to think at nineteen. -- She did not blame Lady Russell, she did not blame herself for having been guided by her; but she felt that were any young person, in similar circumstances, to apply to her for counsel, they would never receive any of such certain immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good. -- She was persuaded that under every disadvantage of disapprobation at home, and every anxiety attending his profession, all their probable fears, delays and disappointments, she should yet have been a happier woman in maintaining the engagement, than she had been in the sacrifice of it; and this, she fully believed, had the usual share, had even more than a usual share of all such solicitudes and suspense been theirs, without reference to the actual results of their case, which, as it happened, would have bestowed earlier prosperity than could be reasonably calculated on. (29)

On hearing that Admiral Croft is to rent Kellynch Hall, and knowing that Captain Wentworth is Mrs. Croft's brother, Anne is painfully but urgently anxious to discover Frederick Wentworth's present feelings towards her. The decisive significance that attaches for Anne to the first meeting with Wentworth generates such nervous apprehension and confused agitation that she cannot actively go where she knows or suspects Wentworth will be. Her feelings fluctuate wildly between hope and despair: she cannot go to meet certainty. The first meeting is upon her, and past, in a confused, seeming instant. Nor is she left long in doubt: herself wishing desperately to hope, she is told by her sister Mary,

"Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne,

though he was so attentive to me. Henrietta asked him what he thought of you, when they went away; and he said, "You were so altered he should not have known you again."

Mary had no feelings to make her respect her sister's in a common way; but she was perfectly unsuspicious of being inflicting any peculiar wound.

"Altered beyond his knowledge!" Anne fully submitted, in silent, deep mortification. (60-61)

At this point Jane Austen breaks the consistency of the narrative point of view to give the thoughts of Captain Wentworth:

Frederick Wentworth had used such words, or something like them, but without an idea that they would be carried round to her. He had thought her wretchedly altered, and, in the first moment of appeal, had spoken as he felt. He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill; deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure. She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity. . . . Her power with him was gone for ever.

It was now his object to marry. . . . He had a heart for either of the Miss Musgroves, if they could catch it; a heart, in short, for any pleasing young woman who came in his way, excepting Anne Elliot. (61)

Wentworth misjudges Anne; he will not respond to her and to his own emotions because of a prejudiced, resentful imposition: this embittered restriction of his spontaneity and freedom of response is destructive of his own happiness and of Anne's.

With the help of time and experience, Anne teaches Wentworth that he has grievously misjudged her, that the general assumptions he has formed from what he believes of her particular behaviour are themselves false, and finally that he, more than anyone else, is to blame for the prolongation of their separation. Anne herself learns that

she can be happy and she gains a surer conviction that her behaviour at nineteen was correct, that, though she has suffered painfully for her decision, the suffering has itself taught her much and has prepared them both more fully for marriage. They have a still closer personal knowledge and understanding and each is thus more conscious of the real value of the other. This, however, is the process of the novel, and Anne's happiness is only gradually won and revealed. After this first meeting with Wentworth all hope of happiness seems gone. She is nothing in the family and nothing to the man she loves.

In Persuasion, 'nothing' and related negative words and phrases have a similar central thematic significance to that they carry in King Lear. The users of, and the uses to which these words -- particularly nothing itself -- are put, shift and the changes are closely related to, are, in fact, significant of the changes in Anne's position and prospects. I have already indicated that at the beginning of the novel Anne is nothing to her family. She is beneath Sir Walter's notice because she is, he considers, lacking in the physical qualifications of the truly superior Elliot. When the family's economic difficulties become unavoidable Anne hears of them only through Lady Russell. Sir Walter has sought Lady Russell's advice after he and Elizabeth have quickly exhausted their ingenuity in considering the problem. Lady Russell takes a remarkable step:

She consulted Anne, who never seemed considered by the others as having any interest in the question. (12)

The decision to quit Kellynch -- a solution in direct conflict with the one Anne's suggestions to Lady Russell would have afforded -- is, in fact, made without any consideration of Anne's opinions. And, once this decision is taken, those other decisions consequent upon it are no concern of Anne. Sir Walter and Elizabeth must now decide where they shall live.

> There had been three alternatives, London, Bath, or another house in the country. All Anne's wishes had been for the latter. A small house in their own neighbourhood, where they might still have Lady Russell's society, still be near Mary, and still have the pleasure of sometimes seeing the lawns and groves of Kellynch, was the object of her ambition. But the usual fate of Anne attended her, in having something very opposite from her inclination fixed on. She disliked Bath, and did not think it agreed with her -- and Bath was to be her home.
> Sir Walter had at first thought more of London, but Mr. Shepherd felt that he could not be trusted in London, and had been skilful enough to dissuade him from it, and make Bath preferred. (14)

As I noted earlier, there is a radical difference between Anne's apprehension of what are the priorities of the family's true dignity and the assumptions of the rest of her family on this matter. For Anne their dignity is compatible only with the honest fulfilment of family responsibilities and the fullest possible maintenance of family tradition, of which Kellynch Hall is the fundamental expression. Sir Walter and Elizabeth consider that their real dignity resides in their rank, their personal splendour, and the glamour of the way in which they live.

It is taken for granted that Anne accompanies the

family willy-nilly to Bath: she is, as much as the family carriage, a part of the Elliot household effects, though hardly so often thought of, and certainly much less serviceable.

Lady Russell, convinced that Anne would not be allowed to be of any use, or any importance, in the choice of the house which they were going to secure, was very unwilling to have her hurried away so soon, and wanted to make it possible for her to stay behind, till she might convey her to Bath herself after Christmas; but having engagements of her own, which must take her from Kellynch for several weeks, she was unable to give the full invitation she wished; and Anne, though dreading the possible heats of September in all the white glare of Bath, and grieving to forego all the influence so sweet and so sad of the autumnal months in the country, did not think that, every thing considered, she wished to remain. It would be most right, and most wise, and, therefore, must involve least suffering, to go with the others. (33)

And though Anne does not finally go with the family to Bath, the decision is hardly her own:

Something occurred, however, to give her a different duty. Mary, often a little unwell, and always thinking a great deal of her own complaints, and always in the habit of claiming Anne when any thing was the matter, was indisposed; and foreseeing that she should not have a day's health all the autumn, entreated, or rather required her, for it was hardly entreaty, to come to Uppercross Cottage, and bear her company as long as she should want her, instead of going to Bath.

"I cannot possibly do without Anne," was Mary's reasoning; and Elizabeth's reply was, "Then I am sure Anne had better stay, for nobody will want her in Bath."

To be claimed as a good, though in an improper style, is at least better than being rejected as no good at all; and Anne, glad to be thought of some use, glad to have any thing marked out as a duty, and certainly not sorry to have the scene of it in the country, and her own dear country, readily agreed to stay. (33)

So Anne, unlike the family carriage, does not go to Bath. As Sir Walter, Elizabeth, and Mrs. Clay drive off in full dignity, Anne walks 'in a sort of desolate tranquillity,

to the Lodge' (36).

Mrs. Clay, the widowed daughter of Sir Walter's lawyer, is Elizabeth's intimate companion, closer and of far greater consequence to her than Anne. The intimacy is one that Lady Russell rightly deprecates; but to no avail.

Lady Russell, indeed, had scarcely any influence with Elizabeth, and seemed to love her, rather because she would love her, than because Elizabeth deserved it. She had never received from her more than outward attention, nothing beyond the observances of complaisance; had never succeeded in any point which she wanted to carry, against previous inclination. She had been repeatedly very earnest in trying to get Anne included in the visit to London, sensibly open to all the injustice and all the discredit of the selfish arrangements which shut her out, and on many lesser occasions had endeavoured to give Elizabeth the advantage of her own better judgement and experience -- but always in vain; Elizabeth would go her own way -- and never had she pursued it in more decided opposition to Lady Russell, than in this selection of Mrs. Clay; turning from the society of so deserving a sister to bestow her affection and confidence on one who ought to have been nothing to her but the object of distant civility. (16)

Elizabeth's absolute disregard of Lady Russell's advice, of her persuasion, is, of course, an intended contrast with the conduct of Anne, and is a noteworthy early authorial comment on that conduct.

But despite Lady Russell's anxieties, Mrs. Clay is an indispensable member of the party for Bath. Unlike Anne, she is to be of the greatest use to the family there:

Lady Russell was almost startled by the wrong of one part of the Kellynch-hall plan, when it burst on her, which was, Mrs. Clay's being engaged to go to Bath with Sir Walter and Elizabeth, as a most important and valuable assistant to the latter in all the business before her. Lady Russell was extremely sorry that such a measure should have been resorted to at all -- wondered, grieved, and feared -- and the affront it contained to Anne, in Mrs. Clay's being of so much use, while Anne could be of none,

was a very sore aggravation. (34)

Mrs. Clay's particular use is to be discerned in her relation to Sir Walter and Elizabeth, which is of exactly the same nature as that of the 'Castalian State' to Bufo in Pope's Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.

> Proud, as Apollo on his forked hill,
> Sate full-blown Bufo, puff'd by ev'ry quill;
> Fed with soft Dedication all day long,
> Horace and he went hand in hand in song.
> His Library, (where Busts of Poets dead
> And a true Pindar stood without a head)
> Receiv'd of Wits an undistinguish'd race,
> Who first his Judgement ask'd, and then a Place:
> Much they extoll'd his Pictures, much his Seat,
> And flatter'd ev'ry day, and some days eat.
> (231-240)

Her importance to the Elliots in the commonwealth of conceit is emphasised when she later deserts them with William Walter Elliot:

> It cannot be doubted that Sir Walter and Elizabeth were shocked and mortified by the loss of their companion, and the discovery of their deception in her. They had their great cousins, to be sure, to resort to for comfort; but they must long feel that to flatter and follow others, without being flattered and followed in turn, is but a state of half enjoyment. (251)

Though Anne is inured to this kind of insult from her family, she is sensible of the impropriety and possible danger of Mrs. Clay's permanent presence on terms of such familiarity.

> Anne herself was become hardened to such affronts; but she felt the imprudence of the arrangement quite as keenly as Lady Russell. With a great deal of quiet observation, and a knowledge, which she often wished less, of her father's character, she was sensible that results the most serious to his family from the intimacy, were more than possible. . . . Anne was so impressed by the degree of their danger, that she could not excuse herself from trying to make it perceptible to her sister. She had

little hope of success; but Elizabeth, who in the event of such a reverse would be so much more to be pitied than herself, should never, she thought, have reason to reproach her for giving no warning. (34)

Anne's sense of family responsibility convinces her that it is her duty to speak: she does so, thanklessly.

She spoke, and seemed only to offend. Elizabeth could not conceive how such an absurd suspicion should occur to her; and indignantly answered for each party's perfectly knowing their situation.
Anne had done -- glad that it was over, and not absolutely hopeless of doing good. Elizabeth, though resenting the suspicion, might yet be made observant by it. (35-36)

Thus Anne goes to Uppercross Cottage to be of use to Mary, who shares the Elliot sense of Anne's inconsequence, except as a convenience in time of boredom. She is incredulous that Anne could have anything to keep her at Kellynch, and when Anne has explained what family duties have required her attention, Mary's casual unconcern with such trivia is expressed by the tired "Oh! well", and the easy shift to more important and interesting matters: "But you have never asked me one word about our dinner at the Pooles yesterday" (39).

Mary's sense of her importance is in inverse proportion to her sense. Lacking in personal qualities, she seeks to ballast her dignity by a vulgar, offensive insistence upon rights of precedence to which her rank as an Elliot strictly entitles her. Anne has a quite opposite attitude to the pedantic intricacies of vacuous social form.

"Where shall we go?" said she [Mary], when they were ready. "I suppose you will not like to call at the Great

House before they have been to see you?"
"I have not the slightest objection on that account," replied Anne. "I should never think of standing on such ceremony with people I know so well as Mrs. and the Miss Musgroves." (39-40)

But while Mary is perfectly prepared to admit the deficiency of respect she sees, as it regards Anne, yet, as it concerns her through Anne, it is of great import. Anne is of derivative consequence because it is a part of Mary's dignity that she be so: "Oh! but they ought to call upon you as soon as possible. They ought to feel what is due to you as <u>my</u> sister" (40).

Without underestimating her own personal qualities, Anne cannot but contrast the Musgrove family situation, based as it is upon warmth and affection, with that of her own family and her own position in her family.

[Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove] were of consequence at home, and favourites abroad. Anne always contemplated them as some of the happiest creatures of her acquaintance; but still, saved as we all are by some comfortable feeling of superiority from wishing for the possibility of exchange, she would not have given up her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments; and envied them nothing but that seemingly perfect good understanding and agreement together, that good-humoured mutual affection, of which she had known so little herself with either of her sisters. (41)

With all their faults of taste and breeding, the Musgroves are an essentially healthy family, and one whose warm and good-natured preference for its own causes Anne to think ruefully, though not resentfully, of her own solitariness:

She played a great deal better than either of the Miss Musgroves; but having no voice, no knowledge of the harp, and no fond parents to sit by and fancy themselves delighted, her performance was little thought of, only out of civility, or to refresh the others, as she was well aware. She knew

that when she played she was giving pleasure only to herself; but this was no new sensation: excepting one short period of her life, she had never since the age of fourteen, never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had been always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's fond partiality for their own daughters' performance, and total indifference to any other person's, gave her much more pleasure for their sakes, than mortification for her own. (46-47)

The selfless generosity of Anne's nature is strong enough for her to more than endure her distress.

Here also, then, Anne is silently conscious that she can be of small importance. But, in contrast to her father and sisters, Anne acknowledges 'it to be very fitting, that every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of discourse' (43). Her rights to consideration are not at all of the same nature as what she ought to be able to expect in her own family. Anne knows the facts of society.

ANNE had not wanted this visit to Uppercross, to learn that a removal from one set of people to another, though at a distance of only three miles, will often include a total change of conversation, opinion, and idea. She had never been staying there before, without being struck by it, or wishing that other Elliots could have her advantage in seeing how unknown, or unconsidered there, were the affairs which at Kellynch-hall were treated as of such general publicity and pervading interest; yet, with all this experience, she believed she must now submit to feel that another lesson, in the art of knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle, was becoming necessary for her. (42)

Sadly, Anne knows her own nothingness within, as beyond, her own circle.

It is while she is staying at Uppercross that Anne's first meeting with Wentworth, to which I have already

referred, takes place. She is resigned to being nothing in her own family, she accepts that she is nothing to the Musgrove family, but she wishes desperately that to Frederick Wentworth she may be of consequence. This is the chance that does redeem all sorrows. In Chapter VIII, following the one in which Wentworth first re-enters her company, Anne reflects,

> They had no conversation together, no intercourse but what the commonest civility required. Once so much to each other! Now nothing! There had been a time, when of all the large party now filling the drawing-room at Uppercross, they would have found it most difficult to cease to speak to one another. With the exception, perhaps, of Admiral and Mrs. Croft, who seemed particularly attached and happy, (Anne would allow no other exception even among the married couples) there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved. Now they were as strangers; nay, worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was perpetual estrangement. (63-64)

Anne must watch the man she loves making himself agreeable to others. While he dances, and pays court to others, Anne plays -- she is of use.

> The evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her services, as usual, and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed, and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved. (71)

Anne sits apart from the group, playing for them; but she is even more isolated mentally than this physical apartness might suggest. The figures about her are almost phantasmagoric, but they are themselves only too real; it is Anne herself who creates unreality: so complete is her sense of dissociation.

> Her fingers were mechanically at work, proceeding for half

an hour together, equally without error, and without consciousness. Once she felt that he was looking at herself -- observing her altered features, perhaps, trying to trace in them the ruins of the face which had once charmed him; and once she knew that he must have spoken of her; -- she was hardly aware of it, till she heard the answer; but then she was sure of his having asked his partner whether Miss Elliot never danced? The answer was, "Oh! no, never; she has quite given up dancing. She had rather play. She is never tired of playing." (72)

Captain Wentworth avoids her as far as possible. A mistake makes some sort of exchange unavoidable:

He saw her, and, instantly rising, said, with studied politeness,
"I beg your pardon, madam, this is your seat;" and though she drew back with a decided negative, he was not to be induced to sit down again.
Anne did not wish for more of such looks and speeches. His cold politeness, his ceremonious grace, were worse than any thing. (72)

When Wentworth uses social form in this manner to distance Anne, and to underline his attitude to her, it is more painful than when she had remained simply nothing.

The main interest that Anne is permitted to take in Frederick Wentworth is to observe him with Henrietta and Louisa and to consider which of these sisters he will choose to love. It must pain Anne, but it is significant, that Wentworth's approval is secured by the sister who seems to him most unlike Anne Elliot; and unlike her most in what he considers firmness and resolution of character. On the morning of the November walk, where 'Anne's object was, not to be in the way of any body' (84), Captain Wentworth mentions that Admiral and Mrs. Croft intended a drive in the same area.

"I wonder whereabouts they will be upset today. Oh! it

does happen very often, I assure you -- but my sister makes nothing of it -- she would as lieve be tossed out as not." (84)

Louisa Musgrove is eager in her reply:

"Ah! You make the most of it, I know," cried Louisa, "but if it were really so, I should do just the same in her place. If I loved a man, as she loves the Admiral, I would be always with him, nothing should ever separate us, and I would rather be overturned by him, than driven safely by anybody else."

It was spoken with enthusiasm.

"Had you?" cried he, catching the same tone; "I honour you!" And there was a silence between them for a little while.

Anne could not immediately fall into a quotation again. The sweet scenes of autumn were for a while put by -- unless some tender sonnet, fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year, with declining happiness, and the images of youth and hope, and spring, all gone together, blessed her memory. She roused herself to say, as they struck by order into another path, "Is not this one of the ways to Winthrop?" But nobody heard, or, at least, nobody answered her. (85)

Anne catches the implications of Wentworth's interested praise, and, later, the connection she sees is confirmed. Henrietta, for whom the real, if unspoken, object of the walk is to visit Charles Hayter, is almost diverted from her purpose by Mary's exclamation on seeing Winthrop, that she is ready to turn back. Mary's sudden fatigue is, of course, recognizable to all as a consequence of her snobbish distaste for Charles Hayter, and her wish to prevent any connection. But Henrietta is persuaded by Louisa to make the visit. While this is taking place, Anne overhears Wentworth and Louisa in conversation.

"And so, I made her go. I could not bear that she should be frightened from the visit by such nonsense. What! -- would I be turned back from doing a thing that I had determined to do, and that I knew to be right, by the airs and interference of such a person? -- or, of any person I

may say. No, -- I have no idea of being so easily persuaded. When I have made up my mind, I have made it. And Henrietta seemed entirely to have made up hers to call at Winthrop to-day -- and yet, she was as near giving it up out of nonsensical complaisance!"

"Happy for her, to have such a mind as yours at hand! . . . Your sister is an amiable creature; but yours is the character of decision and firmness, I see. If you value her conduct or happiness, infuse as much of your own spirit into her, as you can. But this, no doubt, you have been always doing. It is the worst evil of too yielding and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended on. -- You are never sure of a good impression being durable. Every body may sway it; let those who would be happy be firm." (87-88)

And Wentworth continues with what seems to Anne conclusive personal warmth:

"My first wish for all, whom I am interested in, is that they should be firm. If Louisa Musgrove would be beautiful and happy in her November of life, she will cherish all her present powers of mind." (88)

Ironically, however, during this first Uppercross section, when it seems that Anne is most estranged from Wentworth, and there is certainly a deliberate formality and wish to avoid in his behaviour towards her, Anne is truly more close to Wentworth than anybody. She notes and understands the peculiarities of his manner; she comprehends his intentions and state of mind as does no one else. They are linked by the past. The past, which to Elizabeth is nothing,[4] decrees that, though they may seem apart, they are inevitably linked by knowledge and experience. Words and action assume for Anne and Wentworth an individuality of significance, a personality, that is their own. The past is far from nothing to them. Or rather to Anne, the past, as it is time, as it is eight years, is nothing:

Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! What might not eight years do? It included nearly a third part of her own life.
Alas! with all her reasonings, she found, that to retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing. (60)

Though they rarely speak to each other there is a communion between them. Wentworth speaks of the year six with composure, but Anne knows what must be beneath the composure.

Though his voice did not falter, and though she had no reason to suppose his eye wandering towards herself while he spoke, Anne felt the utter impossibility, from her knowledge of his mind, that he could be unvisited by remembrance any more than herself. There must be the same immediate association of thought, though she was very far from conceiving it to be of equal pain. (63)

Anne is silently distinguished in not sharing the general ignorance of all navy matters, an ignorance in which the Musgrove girls particularly distinguish themselves. Anne notices Captain Wentworth's immediate reaction to Mrs. Musgrove's sentimental arabesque on Dick -- "poor Richard" now that he is dead.

There was a momentary expression in Captain Wentworth's face at this speech, a certain glance of his bright eye, and curl of his handsome mouth, which convinced Anne, that instead of sharing in Mrs. Musgrove's kind wishes, as to her son, he had probably been at some pains to get rid of him; but it was too transient an indulgence of self-amusement to be detected by any who understood him less than herself. (67)

Anne can tell also that Wentworth is not in love with either of the Musgrove girls -- though she is aware that he is ready to love. She notices what is beneath his polite seeming acquiescence to Mary's show of Elliot

snobbery:

> "It is very unpleasant, having such connexions! But I assure you, I have never been in the house above twice in my life."
> She received no other answer, than an artificial, assenting smile, followed by a contemptuous glance, as he turned away, which Anne perfectly knew the meaning of. (86)

Besides this strange knowledge in apartness deriving from the past, there is a development of new knowledge of the present, incomplete, but embryonic. Anne sees that Wentworth misunderstands and misjudges her past behaviour. He learns that she has rejected a favourable marriage with Charles Musgrove. And though Anne hears Louisa tell Wentworth that "papa and mama always think it was her great friend Lady Russell's doing that she did not [marry Charles]. They think Charles might not be learned and bookish enough to please Lady Russell, and that therefore, she persuaded Anne to refuse him" (89), Wentworth suspects the truth. The truth is,

> Lady Russell had lamented her refusal; . . . she would have rejoiced to see her at twenty-two so respectably removed from the partialities and injustice of her father's house, and settled so permanently near herself. But in this case, Anne had left nothing for advice to do. (28-29)

Similarly, as Anne understands things about Wentworth, he too detects, partly because he knows and partly because he considers Anne, emotions and states in her that others are ignorant of. It is he who rescues Anne from the pestiferous attentions of young Walter Musgrove. As Anne attends to the other injured son, Walter, a playful two-year-old, clambers about her back, hanging on her hair and about her

neck.

"Walter," said she, "get down this moment. You are extremely troublesome. I am very angry with you."

"Walter," cried Charles Hayter, "why do you not do as you are bid? Do not you hear your aunt speak? Come to me, Walter, come to Cousin Charles."

But not a bit did Walter stir.

In another moment, however, she found herself in the state of being released from him; some one was taking him from her, though he had bent down her head so much, that his little sturdy hands were unfastened from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it. (80)

When they encounter the Crofts on the return from Winthrop, Wentworth notes that Anne is tired, and quietly arranges that the general invitation to ride back in their chaise is turned to a particular one to Anne.

Wentworth sees, also, that though Anne is of small consequence, she is, however ill-appreciated, of much use. She has come to Uppercross on a whim not her own; in her sister's family she is the break-water between husband and wife; she must listen to the complaints of Mary against the Musgroves, and of the Musgroves against Mary. And for someone who is nothing she is close to being indispensable. Immediately upon Captain Wentworth's arrival at Kellynch, young Charles Musgrove suffers an accident at Uppercross Cottage.

His collar-bone was found to be dislocated, and such injury received in the back, as roused the most alarming ideas. It was an afternoon of distress, and Anne had every thing to do at once -- the apothecary to send for -- the father to have pursued and informed -- the mother to support and keep from hysterics -- the servants to control -- the youngest child to banish, and the poor suffering one to attend and soothe; -- besides sending, as soon as she recollected it, proper notice to the other house, which brought her an accession rather of frightened, enquiring

companions, than of very useful assistants. (53)

The incident is in clear anticipation of Anne's conduct at Lyme. While the parents go to enjoy the society at the Great House, Anne remains at the Cottage with their injured child.

> They were gone, she hoped, to be happy, however oddly constructed such happiness might seem; as for herself, she was left with as many sensations of comfort, as were, perhaps, ever likely to be hers. She knew herself to be of the first utility to the child; and what was it to her, if Frederick Wentworth were only half a mile distant, making himself agreeable to others! (58)

Of her normal relations with her sister's children, Jane Austen comments,

> She was always on friendly terms with her brother-in-law; and in the children, who loved her nearly as well, and respected her a great deal more than their mother, she had an object of interest, amusement, and wholesome exertion. (43)

Her effect on the hypochondriacal Mary, on arrival, is remarkable. For someone who is nothing, Anne achieves much.

The next major structural and developmental block is the trip to and events of Lyme. The most enthusiastic and resolute to go is Louisa.

> Louisa, who was the most eager of the eager, having formed the resolution to go, and besides the pleasure of doing as she liked, being now armed with the idea of merit in maintaining her own way, bore down all the wishes of her father and mother for putting it off till the summer. (94)

At Lyme they meet Captain Harville, and Captain Benwick, who had been engaged to Captain Harville's sister. The good easy manners of the Harvilles and their general amiableness further point for Anne, who remains an unobtrusive member of the party, what the loss of Wentworth

has meant for her.

> Captain Harville, though not equalling Captain Wentworth in manners, was a perfect gentleman, unaffected, warm, and obliging. Mrs. Harville, a degree less polished than her husband, seemed however to have the same good feelings; and nothing could be more pleasant than their desire of considering the whole party as friends of their own, because the friends of Captain Wentworth, or more kindly hospitable than their entreaties for their all promising to dine with them.
>
> There was so much attachment to Captain Wentworth in all this, and such a bewitching charm in a degree of hospitablity so uncommon, so unlike the usual style of give-and-take invitations, and dinners of formality and display, that Anne felt her spirits not likely to be benefited by an increasing acquaintance among his brother-officers. "These would have been all my friends," was her thought; and she had to struggle against a great tendency to lowness. (97-98)

The value of Wentworth is emphasised by the deep devotion and esteem of these people. And some at least of the basis for this devotion is revealed by Captain Harville. On his return to port, Benwick had to be told of the death of Fanny Harville:

> "Nobody could do it, but that good fellow, (pointing to Captain Wentworth.) The Laconia had come into Plymouth the week before; no danger of her being sent to sea again. He stood his chance for the rest -- wrote up for leave of absence, but without waiting the return, travelled night and day till he got to Portsmouth, rowed off to the Grappler that instant, and never left the poor fellow for a week; that's what he did, and nobody else could have saved poor James. You may think, Miss Elliot, whether he is dear to us!" (108)

We may remember the improvement of even Dick Musgrove when under Captain Wentworth's command, and that the only two letters his father and mother ever received from Dick were written from the Laconia 'under the influence of his captain' (51).

Wentworth's attitude to Benwick marks, however,

the relative deficiency of his judgement in personal affairs in comparison with that of Anne.

> Captain Wentworth believed it impossible for man to be more attached to woman than poor Benwick had been to Fanny Harville, or to be more deeply afflicted under the dreadful change. He considered his disposition of the sort which must suffer heavily, uniting very strong feelings with quiet, serious, and retiring manners, and a decided taste for reading and sedentary pursuits. (96-97)

Anne is deeply sympathetic to Benwick, but she has a keen knowledge of human nature and shrewdly senses in Benwick a very different nature and situation from her own:

> "He has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have. I cannot believe his prospects so blighted for ever. He is younger than I am; younger in feeling, if not in fact; younger as a man. He will rally again, and be happy with another." (97)

And she reflects,

> He had a pleasing face and a melancholy air, just as he ought to have, and drew back from conversation. (97)

Nonetheless, Anne and Benwick are thrown together, and she hopes to be of use to him.

> It fell to Anne's lot to be placed rather apart with Captain Benwick; and a very good impulse of her nature obliged her to begin an acquaintance with him. . . . she had the hope of being of real use to him in some suggestions as to the duty and benefit of struggling against affliction, which had naturally grown out of their conversation. (100)

Yet, though Mary, Elliot as she is, persists in treating Anne as a drudge, there are significant changes. After they learn that it is William Walter Elliot who has been staying at the same inn, Mary tells Anne,

> "Of course," said Mary, "you will mention our seeing Mr. Elliot, the next time you write to Bath. I think my father certainly ought to hear of it; do mention all about him."
> Anne avoided a direct reply, but it was just the

circumstance which she considered as not merely unnecessary to be communicated, but as what ought to be suppressed. Mary never wrote to Bath herself; all the toil of keeping up a slow and unsatisfactory correspondence with Elizabeth fell on Anne. (107)

But Anne, whose early bloom had proved premature and like her love was blighted, under the influence of the sea air -- and, perhaps, the presence of Captain Wentworth -- is showing signs of a second spring of beauty. It is brought starkly before Wentworth's notice by another man's obvious admiration of her.

When they came to the steps, leading upwards from the beach, a gentleman at the same moment preparing to come down, politely drew back, and stopped to give them way. They ascended and passed him; and as they passed, Anne's face caught his eye, and he looked at her with a degree of earnest admiration, which she could not be insensible of. She was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features, having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which it had also produced. It was evident that the gentleman, (completely a gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked round at her instantly in a way which shewed his noticing of it. He gave her a momentary glance, -- a glance of brightness, which seemed to say, "That man is struck with you, -- and even I, at this moment, see something like Anne Elliot again." (104)

Moreover, the climactic moment at Lyme is climacteric in the relationship of Wentworth and Anne. As the party is about to leave Lyme there is a sudden wish for a last walk on the Cobb. Louisa grasps the opportunity relentlessly to exemplify her strength of mind, the firmness of her will.

As they drew near the Cobb, there was such a general wish to walk along it once more, all were so inclined, and Louisa soon grew so determined, that the difference of a quarter of an hour, it was found, would be no difference at all. (109)

Characters who make the individual will a principle of

reality inevitably finally suffer the shock of a harsh contact with reality in these novels. For Louisa Musgrove this unavoidable collision with reality is expressed in the impact of her fall on the cobblestones of the Cobb. What was to be 'no difference at all' brings her close to death.

> There was too much wind to make the high part of the new Cobb pleasant for the ladies, and they agreed to get down the steps to the lower, and all were contented to pass quietly and carefully down the steep flight, excepting Louisa; she must be jumped down them by Captain Wentworth. In all their walks, he had to jump her from the stiles; the sensation was delightful to her. The hardness of the pavement for her feet, made him less willing upon the present occasion; he did it, however; she was safely down, and instantly to shew her enjoyment, ran up the steps to be jumped down again. He advised her against it, thought the jar too great; but no, he reasoned and talked in vain; she smiled and said, "I am determined I will:" he put out his hands; she was too precipitate by half a second, she fell on the pavement of the Lower Cobb, and was taken up lifeless! (109)

The accident effects a change in Louisa Musgrove's attitude to life. It also forces upon Wentworth the crudity and the falsity of his judgement of Anne. The brief, swift incident reproduces, starkly, the salient features of Anne's situation at nineteen. Louisa laughs at Wentworth's negative persuasion, and the consequence is a comment on her folly and on Anne's good sense. Louisa's behaviour is unconsidered, and reckless: she makes wilfulness a virtue. Anne acts on the basis of responsible but spontaneous judgements that are shaped by her knowledge of herself as by her wishes. As the stunned, grieving party returns to Uppercross, leaving the still unconscious Louisa in the

Harville's care, Wentworth bursts out,

"Don't talk of it, don't talk of it. . . . Oh God! that I had not given way to her at the fatal moment! Had I done as I ought! But so eager and so resolute! Dear, sweet Louisa!" (116)

And Anne reflects,

Anne wondered whether it ever occurred to him now, to question the justness of his own previous opinion as to the universal felicity and advantage of firmness of character; and whether it might not strike him, that, like all other qualities of the mind, it should have its proportions and limits. She thought it could scarcely escape him to feel, that a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favour of happiness, as a very resolute character. (116)

The accident does more, however, than teach Wentworth the folly of his judgement. It slashes through all the self-assertion, self-concern, and statement that would make Anne nothing, and reveals her true value, the reality of Anne: the quality of nothing.

"Is there no one to help me?" were the first words which burst from Captain Wentworth, in a tone of despair, and as if all strength were gone.

"Go to him, go to him," cried Anne, "for heaven's sake go to him. I can support her myself. Leave me, and go to him. Rub her hands, rub her temples; here are salts, -- take them, take them."

. . . Every thing was done that Anne had prompted, but in vain; while Captain Wentworth, staggering against the wall for his support, exclaimed in the bitterest agony,

"Oh God! her father and mother!"

"A surgeon!" said Anne.

He caught the word; it seemed to rouse him at once, and saying only "True, true, a surgeon this instant," was darting away, when Anne eagerly suggested,

"Captain Benwick, would it not be better for Captain Benwick? He knows where a surgeon is to be found."

Anne, attending with all the strength and zeal, and thought, which instinct supplied, to Henrietta, still tried, at intervals, to suggest comfort to the others, tried to quiet Mary, to animate Charles, to assuage the feelings of Captain Wentworth. Both seemed to look to her for directions.

"Anne, Anne," cried Charles, "what is to be done next?"

> Captain Wentworth's eyes were also turned towards her. (110-111)

From being of no consequence, seemingly nothing, Anne becomes the centre of attention, the focus of dependence. Anne displays true strength of mind which is not recklessness. And when Louisa, insensate still, has been carried to Captain Harville's house, Anne overhears Wentworth declare,

> "Mrs. Charles Musgrove will, of course, wish to get back to her children; but, if Anne will stay, no one so proper, so capable as Anne!" (114)

But Mrs. Charles Musgrove senses an affront to her consequence, the Elliot consequence, which continues to judge Anne as nothing.

> When the plan was made known to Mary, however, there was an end of all peace in it. She was so wretched, and so vehement, complained so much of injustice in being expected to go away, instead of Anne; -- Anne, who was nothing to Louisa, while she was her sister, and had the best right to stay in Henrietta's stead! Why was not she to be as useful as Anne? (115)

Nevertheless, the first section closes significantly with an appeal from Wentworth to Anne for approval:

> "I have been considering what we had best do. She [Henrietta] must not appear at first. She could not stand it. I have been thinking whether you had better not remain in the carriage with her, while I go in and break it to Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove. Do you think this a good plan?"
> She did: he was satisfied, and said no more. (117)

The Second Volume of Persuasion is marked by an increasing, significant positivity in the attitude of characters to Anne. Those whose recognition is meaningful come to a fuller, juster sense of what she is. Anne becomes of consequence, and gradually she becomes herself more self-assertive.

The central part of this Second Volume is, of course, the action at Bath. But the Uppercross prelude to this is important. Anne stays at the mansion-house where 'she had the satisfaction of knowing herself extremely useful, both as an immediate companion, and as assisting in all those arrangements for the future, which, in Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove's distressed state of spirits, would have been difficulties' (121). Charles Musgrove, who brings news from Lyme, is all praise for Mrs. Harville, exclaiming, "She really left nothing for Mary to do" (121). Thus, Anne is useful at Uppercross: Mary has the 'sense of being so very useful' (130) at Lyme, while she idly passes away her time wondering how next to occupy and enjoy herself. With Anne's guidance, the family's old nurse-maid is sent off to Lyme to help in the care of Louisa:

> Vague wishes of getting Sarah thither, had occurred before to Mrs. Musgrove and Henrietta; but without Anne, it would hardly have been resolved on, and found practicable so soon. (122)

Anne's departure brings an astonishing reaction, considering of how little consequence she is to her own family:

> Anne was to leave them on the morrow, an event which they all dreaded. "What should they do without her? They were wretched comforters for one another!" (122)

And though Anne cannot but reflect on the bleakness of the future, there is, nonetheless, within her a new sense and hope of awakening life and beauty. Left alone at Uppercross Cottage, she thinks,

> If Louisa recovered, it would all be well again. More than former happiness would be restored. There could not

be a doubt, to her mind there was none, of what would follow her recovery. A few months hence, and the room now so deserted, occupied but by her silent, pensive self, might be filled again with all that was happy and gay, all that was glowing and bright in prosperous love, all that was most unlike Anne Elliot! (123)

But her meeting with Lady Russell at Kellynch Lodge is marked by less dismal thoughts:

There was some anxiety mixed with Lady Russell's joy in meeting her. She knew who had been frequenting Uppercross. But happily, either Anne was improved in plumpness and looks, or Lady Russell fancied her so; and Anne, in receiving her compliments on the occasion, had the amusement of connecting them with the silent admiration of her cousin, and of hoping that she was to be blessed with a second spring of youth and beauty. (123-134)

Anne becomes sensible not only that a rather natural change in subjects of interest has taken place during her residence at Uppercross, but that these new preoccupations are intrinsically more interesting, more valuable to her than those of her own family.

She had lately lost sight even of her father and sister and Bath. Their concerns had been sunk under those of Uppercross . . . Anne would have been ashamed to have it known, how much more she was thinking of Lyme, and Louisa Musgrove, and all her acquaintance there; how much more interesting to her was the home and friendship of the Harvilles and Captain Benwick, than her own father's house in Camden-place, or her own sister's intimacy with Mrs. Clay. She was actually forced to exert herself, to meet Lady Russell with any thing like the appearance of equal solicitude, on topics which had by nature the first claim on her. (124)

Although Anne has never been blind to the deficiencies of her family, she now begins herself to give more positive thought -- or rather Jane Austen now shows her giving more positive thought -- to their failings. When Lady Russell refers to the pain that Anne must be feeling in seeing

Kellynch Hall occupied by others than her own family, Anne's perspective on that family is made unequivocal:

> She could have said more on the subject; for she had in fact so high an opinion of the Crofts, and considered her father so very fortunate in his tenants, felt the parish to be so sure of a good example, and the poor of the best attention and relief, that however sorry and ashamed of the necessity of the removal, she could not but in conscience feel that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners'. These convictions must unquestionably have their own pain, and severe was its kind; but they precluded that pain which Lady Russell would suffer in entering the house again, and returning through the well-known apartments.
>
> In such moments Anne had no power of saying to herself, "These rooms ought to belong only to us. Oh, how fallen in their destination! How unworthily occupied! An ancient family to be so driven away! Strangers filling their place!" No, except when she thought of her mother, and remembered where she had been used to sit and preside, she had no sigh of that description to heave. (126)

Nor is this because Anne's attachment to Kellynch Hall is slighter than that of Sir Walter and Elizabeth: I have already touched upon this.

In Jane Austen there is a fundamental dichotomy between the society of the country and that of the town: country breeding, country values, and attachment to the country are generally equivalent in these novels with moral worth and integrity: those who are born and bred in the town, who have town values and attachments, are, at the very least, suspect.[5] In 1796 Jane Austen wrote from London, 'Here I am once more in this scene of dissipation and vice, and I begin already to find my morals corrupted.'[6] And though she is of course being rather playful, the statement expresses a central and firmly held conviction.

R. W. Chapman notes,

> It is clear that she disliked towns in themselves, for their confinement and their meaningless bustle. She reveals herself in Anne Elliot, who 'persisted in a very determined, though very silent, disinclination for Bath', resigning herself to a long 'imprisonment' there, and in poor Fanny's endurance of the glare and squalor of Portsmouth.[7]

The Letters reveal the depth of this dislike of cities, and it is surely significant that Jane Austen's removal in 1801 from her country home to houses in London, Bath, and Southampton was, apparently, accompanied by a break in composition, and that she seems only to have begun writing in earnest again when the family settled at Chawton in 1809.

The novels reveal much more than simple dislike. Interestingly enough, Gabriel Marcel, in 'The Mystery of the Family', to which I have already made reference, has this to say of city life and the family,

> The inexpressible sadness which emanates from great cities, a dismal sadness which belongs to everything that is devitalised, everything that represents a self-betrayal of life, appears to me to be bound up in the most intimate fashion with the decay of the family. This sadness is sterility, it is a disavowal felt by the heart; a disavowal which concerns the very conditions of life.[8]

Though less obviously, perhaps, there is in Jane Austen's writings a similar court -- country antagonism, with the related virtue -- vice and other contrasts, to that found, for example, in pastoral, in Shakespeare, and in the satires of Pope. And if it is convention it is as much deeply felt convention with Jane Austen as it is with Pope. Jane Austen's anti-heroes and anti-heroines are all associated with the town: they have either town origins or town

attachments and very often both. They are all, likewise, products of an unbalanced or disrupted family life, or they have been given too much independence too soon.

In Northanger Abbey, the Thorpes live near London,[9] and Isabella, we are told, 'had a very decided advantage [over Catherine] in discussing such points: she could compare the balls of Bath with those of Tunbridge; its fashions with those of London' (N.A., 33). And Mrs. Thorpe, herself such an irresponsible parent, is a widow.

Of Frank Willoughby's parents in Sense and Sensibility we know little except that they are dead and that he is dependent upon a relative, Mrs. Smith. His love of the pleasures of London life and society and the consequent need for money, both to pay debts contracted and to provide for future expenses, is essentially what causes him to desert Marianne. After Willoughby's attempt to explain, and in some measure excuse, his conduct in Volume III, Chapter VIII, Elinor reflects upon what she has heard:

> Elinor made no answer. Her thoughts were silently fixed on the irreparable injury which too early an independence and its consequent habits of idleness, dissipation, and luxury, had made in the mind, the character, the happiness, of a man who, to every advantage of person and talents, united a disposition naturally open and honest, and a feeling, affectionate temper. The world had made him extravagant and vain -- Extravagance and vanity had made him cold-hearted and selfish. Vanity, while seeking its own guilty triumph at the expense of another, had involved him in a real attachment, which extravagance, or at least its offspring, necessity, had required to be sacrificed. Each faulty propensity in leading him to evil, had led him likewise to punishment. The attachment, from which against honour, against feeling, against every better interest he had outwardly torn himself, now, when no longer allowable, governed every thought; and the connection, for the sake of

which he had, with little scruple, left her sister to misery, was likely to prove a source of unhappiness to himself of a far more incurable nature. (S.S., 331)

Wickham, the anti-hero of Pride and Prejudice, has, from the evidence of the novel, been raised by his father, himself a good man, but who died at a crucial point in Wickham's growth to maturity. His natural tendency to vice has been confirmed by the independence he grasped, using his freedom and capital to savour the delights and dissipation of London, careless of the need to fix upon a profession.

The Crawfords, along with Lady Susan Vernon, are the embodiment of town life and values. Jane Austen describes the scene and situation of their youth with wry irony. The children of a second marriage, they have been left, on the death of their mother, 'to the care of a brother of their father':

In their uncle's house they had found a kind home. Admiral and Mrs. Crawford, though agreeing in nothing else, were united in affection for these children, or at least were no farther averse in their feelings than that each had their favourite, to whom they showed the greatest fondness of the two. The admiral delighted in the boy, Mrs. Crawford doated on the girl; and it was the lady's death which now obliged her protegée, after some months further trial at her uncle's house, to find another home. Admiral Crawford was a man of vicious conduct, who chose, instead of retaining his niece, to bring his mistress under his own roof. (M.P., 40-41)

Mary speaks of her uncle to strangers with obvious dislike and malice; and what she has learnt in this household, is indicated by her risqué pun when speaking of the navy acquaintance she made there:

"Certainly, my home at my uncle's brought me acquainted with a circle of admirals. Of Rears and Vices, I saw enough.

Now, do not be suspecting me of a pun, I entreat." (M.P., 60)

The basic problems of the title figure of Emma, and thus the central interest of the novel, are directly derivative from her family situation. She is herself, as she says of Frank Churchill, "the child of good fortune", and of too much authority too soon. Jane Austen defines Emma's situation in Chapter I:

> EMMA Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. . . . The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself. (E., 5)

In Emma, the father is as ward to the child, but independence has come to Emma Woodhouse before she is ready for it. Power has made her forgetful of the necessary limitations of power and the responsibilities of those who wield it. In the novel, she learns what Knightley has long known: no one has the rightful power to determine the fate of another:

> Emma laughed, and replied: "But I had the assistance of all your endeavours to counteract the indulgence of other people. I doubt whether my own sense would have corrected me without it."
> "Do you? -- I have no doubt. Nature gave you understanding: Miss Taylor gave you principles. You must have done well. My interference was quite as likely to do harm as good." (462)

Knightley realises the responsibilities and dangers as well as the satisfactions of power; he acts as mentor and corrector to Emma, but she must form herself. The novel shows that formation.

But the anti-hero of Emma is he whom Emma actually

describes as the "child of good fortune" -- Frank Churchill. Churchill is the son of Mr. Weston's first marriage to Miss Churchill of Enscombe, who died after only three years of marriage. Her parents, though offended by a marriage they consider beneath their daughter, offered to take charge of the child and the offer was, after consideration, accepted.

> The boy had, with the additional softening claim of a lingering illness of his mother's, been the means of a sort of reconciliation; and Mr. and Mrs. Churchill, having no children of their own, nor any other young creature of equal kindred to take care for, offered to take the whole charge of the little Frank soon after her decease. Some scruples and some reluctance the widower-father may be supposed to have felt; but as they were overcome by other considerations, the child was given up to the care and wealth of the Churchills, and he had only his own situation to improve as he could. (E., 16)

Thus Frank Curchill became an only 'child', removed from both his actual parents, in a household where his indulgence and the encouragement of his self-esteem are certain. He has, besides, become something of a legend in Highbury -- more legend than son, in fact, to his father. Mr. Weston, we learn, saw his son every year in London, and Frank's first visit to Highbury is interrupted with the excuse that he's off to London to get his hair cut. The news is confirmation enough for Mr. Knightley of his suspicions, and even Emma is dubious.

Persuasion presents a similar opposition which likewise tends to operate as a touchstone of personal value and turpitude.[10] Sir Walter and Elizabeth Elliot ostentatiously parade their rank and history but are more satisfied with and more appropriately set amidst the meretricious elegance

and shoddy delights of Bath than in the quiet dignity of Kellynch Hall with its time-honoured observances. Their removal is symbolic of their actual unfitness to represent the qualities they pervert and to wield the power they have abrogated: their new surroundings are, fittingly, what T. S. Eliot would call an 'objective correlative' of their inner nature. Anne, who is herself conscious of the true meaning of Kellynch Hall, and who shares in its ethos, seeks to preserve its values. She abhors Bath and is warmly attached to the countryside.

In this novel, Jane Austen makes country values the values of the navy also. Admiral and Mrs. Croft are tenants more fitted to hold Kellynch Hall than its effete inheritor. This partiality for the navy is in part, no doubt, an expression of national pride, and in part, certainly, of Jane Austen's family pride. The navy is a profession which Sir Walter Elliot regards with open distaste, and for which he must feel innate revulsion:

> "It is in two points offensive to me; I have two strong grounds of objection to it. First, as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old sooner than any other man; I have observed it all my life. A man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose father, his father might have disdained to speak to, and of becoming prematurely an object of disgust himself than in any other line." (19)

The navy was, in fact, the means of bringing Jane Austen's two brothers, Charles and Francis, into distinction beyond their birth: they both became admirals, and Francis was

knighted. In the Memoir, James Edward Austen-Leigh writes,

> Her two youngest brothers, Francis and Charles, were sailors during that glorious period of the British navy which comprises the close of the last and the beginning of the present century, when it was impossible for an officer to be almost always afloat, as these brothers were, without seeing service which, in these days, would be considered distinguished. Accordingly, they were continually engaged in actions of more or less importance, and sometimes gained promotion by their success. Both rose to the rank of Admiral, and carried out their flags to distant stations. Francis lived to attain the very summit of his profession, having died, in his ninety-third year, G.C.B. and Senior Admiral of the Fleet, in 1865.[11]

Louisa Musgrove, speaking in this instance we may be sure for the more moderate feelings of Jane Austen and Anne Elliot, has this enthusiastic praise for the navy:

> Louisa . . . burst forth into raptures of admiration and delight on the character of the navy -- their friendliness, their brotherliness, their openness, their uprightness; protesting that she was convinced of sailors having more worth and warmth than any other set of men in England; that they only knew how to live, and they only deserved to be respected and loved. (99)

These qualities and values are a structural core permeating the entire novel. There is an innate antagonism between Sir Walter and the Crofts -- expressed so beautifully by Admiral Croft's remark of the improvements he has made at Kellynch Hall, "I have done very little besides sending away some of the large looking-glasses from my dressing-room, which was your father's . . . Such a number of looking-glasses! oh Lord! there was no getting away from oneself" (127-128) -- between the navy and the town, between Anne and the other members of her family, between the country and the town, and an innate attraction between Anne and the Crofts, between the country and the navy. These antagonisms and attractions

resolve themselves in the course of the novel and consolidate its comic resolution.

Besides this broad symbolic patterning, there are in this First Volume other more subtle suggestions of links between Anne and the Croft-Wentworth family. Anne is nothing to her family. Seeking to persuade Sir Walter that Admiral Croft will make a suitable tenant for Kellynch Hall, Mr. Shepherd mentions that Mrs. Croft is "not quite unconnected in this country . . . she is the sister to a gentleman who did live amongst us once" (22-23). When the 'gentleman' is identified, Sir Walter exclaims,

> "Wentworth? Oh! ay, -- Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term gentleman. I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Stafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common."[12] (23)

To be nobody in Sir Walter's estimation is no mean recommendation. Further, Lady Russell's judgement of Wentworth as a prospective husband for Anne was that he was 'a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him' (26). Ironically, Anne has a similar reflection of her own claims to Wentworth when the engagement is re-formed, but I shall speak of this in due course.

Anne's removal now with Lady Russell to Bath and her family is a mournful prospect for her. Lady Russell is heartened by the sights and sounds of Bath:

> Anne did not share these feelings. She persisted in a very determined, though very silent, disinclination for Bath; caught the first dim view of the extensive buildings, smoking in rain, without any wish of seeing them better, felt their

progress through the streets to be, however disagreeable, yet too rapid; for who would be glad to see her when she arrived? And looked back, with fond regret, to the bustle of Uppercross and the seclusion of Kellynch. (135)

Sir Walter has taken a house in Camden-place:

Both he and Elizabeth were settled there, much to their satisfaction.
Anne entered it with a sinking heart, anticipating an imprisonment of many months, and anxiously saying to herself, "Oh! when shall I leave you again?" (137)

Her welcome is warmer than she anticipates, but the reasons for the warmth that Jane Austen gives us are damaging:

A degree of unexpected cordiality, however, in the welcome she received did her good. Her father and sister were glad to see her, for the sake of shewing her the house and furniture, and met her with kindness. Her making a fourth, when they sat down to dinner, was noticed as an advantage. (137)

For them Anne remains nothing: 'They had no inclination to listen to her'. In Bath Sir Walter and Elizabeth have found their true milieu:

Uppercross excited no interest, Kellynch very little, it was all Bath.
They had the pleasure of assuring her that Bath more than answered their expectations in every respect. Their house was undoubtedly the best in Camden-place; their drawing-rooms had many decided advantages over all the others which they had either seen or heard of; and the superiority was not less in the style of fitting up, or the taste of the furniture. Their acquaintance was exceedingly sought after. Every body was wanting to visit them. They had drawn back from many introductions, and still were perpetually having cards left by people of whom they knew nothing. (137-138)

Anne is shamed and <u>her</u> family pride disgusted by their lack of it. The justice of her sentiments at Kellynch is confirmed:

Here were funds of enjoyment! Could Anne wonder that her

father and sister were happy? She might not wonder, but she must sigh that her father should feel no degradation in his change; should see nothing to regret in the duties and dignity of the resident land-holder; should find so much to be vain of in the littlenesses of a town; and she must sigh, and smile, and wonder too, as Elizabeth threw open the folding-doors, and walked with exultation from one drawing-room to the other, boasting of their space, at the possibility of that woman, who had been mistress of Kellynch Hall, finding extent to be proud of between two walls, perhaps thirty feet asunder. (138)

Bath permits Sir Walter to manifest that his dignity is a sham, that he is vulgar and sordid of spirit. It permits Anne to reveal the nobility of her nature and the dignity of her pride.

Sir Walter's delight in Bath is increased by the return to family favour of the heir to Kellynch, William Walter Elliot, whose early presumed apostasy was, it seems, after all only a misunderstanding. Elizabeth, encouraged by Mrs. Clay, sees the return of William Walter, now a widower, as a probable prelude to their union -- so desirable from family and social points of view, the vital criteria for Elizabeth, although, unlike Sir Walter, she is disturbed by time's menace. Anne is suspicious of Elliot's sudden family attention:

She could only offer one solution; it was, perhaps, for Elizabeth s sake. . . . Elizabeth was certainly very handsome, with well-bred elegant manners, and her character might never have been penetrated by Mr. Elliot. (140)

She has no illusions about her sister. Nor can she have any illusions about the value Elizabeth sets upon her. She overhears Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay in conversation:

She could imagine Mrs. Clay to have said, that "now Miss

Anne was come, she could not suppose herself at all wanted;" for Elizabeth was replying, in a sort of whisper, "That must not be any reason, indeed. I assure you I feel it none. She is nothing to me, compared with you". (145)

Sir Walter seconds the insistence that she stay: "You have been here only to be useful", he tells her, closing with a compliment to her "fine mind". Anne's family anxiety is naturally intensified by such references and by Sir Walter's belief that Mrs. Clay's all too visible freckles have disappeared. It is shared, significantly, by others: by Lady Russell, and even by Mary.

The independence of Anne's judgement and its shrewdness is marked by the contrast between her suspicion of W. W. Elliot and Lady Russell's tergiversatory approval. William Walter, like Wickham, knows and can manipulate the counters of family feeling. Lady Russell reflects,

"Can this be Mr. Elliot?" and could not seriously picture to herself a more agreeable or estimable man. Every thing united in him; good understanding, correct opinions, knowledge of the world, and a warm heart. He had strong feelings of family-attachment and family-honour, without pride or weakness . . . Her satisfaction in Mr. Elliot outweighed all the plague of Mrs. Clay. (146-147)

Experience and time have given Anne what she lacked at nineteen -- due confidence in her own judgement, and she silently adheres to her own opinion of Mr. Elliot:

It was now some years since Anne had begun to learn that she and her excellent friend could sometimes think differently; and it did not surprise her, therefore, that Lady Russell should see nothing suspicious or inconsistent, nothing to require more motives than appeared, in Mr. Elliot's great desire of a reconciliation. (147)

Later, Lady Russell attempts to persuade Anne that Mr. Elliot is seeking to recommend himself to her,

and that the marriage, pleasing as it is from so many points of view to herself, will guarantee Anne's personal happiness and grant her a position and the respect which she so rightly merits.

> Lady Russell was now perfectly decided in her opinion of Mr. Elliot. She was as much convinced of his meaning to gain Anne in time, as of his deserving her . . .
> "I am no match-maker, as you well know," said Lady Russell, "being much too well aware of the uncertainty of all human events and calculations. I only mean that if Mr. Elliot should some time hence pay his addresses to you, and if you should be disposed to accept him, I think there would be every possibility of your being happy together. A most suitable connection every body must consider it -- but I think it might be a very happy one. . . .
> "I own that to be able to regard you as the future mistress of Kellynch, the future Lady Elliot -- to look forward and see you occupying your dear mother's place, succeeding to all her rights, and all her popularity, as well as to all her virtues, would be the highest possible gratification to me. -- You are your mother's self in countenance and disposition; and if I might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation, and name, and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot, and only superior to her in being more highly valued! My dearest Anne, it would give me more delight than is often felt at my time of life!" (159-160)

Anne, though she feels the strong attraction of the situation that Lady Russell shrewdly presents, maintains her own less favourable judgement of Mr. Elliot, and is steadfast in her spoken conviction that "we should not suit" (159).

Anne Elliot's conduct in this novel, her reaction to persuasion, is exemplary. Lady Russell fills the place of Anne's mother, and her right to a hearing and to obedience is, for Anne, that of a parent. In <u>The Mysterious Warning</u> (1796), Mrs. Eliza Parsons had expressed

the traditional attitude of Jane Austen's day to a parent's rights in influencing a child's marriage:

> A parent has an undoubted right to a negative voice, to persuade, to reason, and direct a young and inexperienced mind; but to force a child to the altar, from motives of ambition, interest, or to gratify any selfish passions, too generally lays the foundations for that indifference, and neglect of the domestic duties, which terminates in folly, vice, and the ruin of all social happiness.[13]

These principles are precisely the basis of Anne's conduct in the novel. Lady Russell's persuasion, when Anne was an uncertain and inexperienced nineteen, was successful, especially as Anne had herself become convinced that the engagement was against Wentworth's own best interests. The two attempts of Lady Russell to influence Anne in favour of marriage are both unsuccessful. She had favoured Charles Musgrove as a suitor, but 'in this case, Anne had left nothing for advice to do' (29). Now Anne firmly asserts, in face of her championing of Mr. Elliot, "we should not suit".

In Mansfield Park, the crisis of the novel is Fanny Price's similar refusal to yield to persuasion. As I have noted, the heroines in these novels are usually teachers as well as learners. Sir Thomas Bertram behaves with what he considers the best intentions but his authority is fallible, much more so than he cares to recognize. Throughout the novel, Sir Thomas makes clear that he is the descendant of Squire Allworthy in representing the justice of the Old Testament rather than the charity of the New. Authority must be and seem reasonable; the

father must not appear a tyrant to his children or he will not know them. The family should be formed upon loving restraint. Lady Bertram, though inert, is more comforting to Fanny Price on her arrival than is Sir Thomas:

> Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram received her very kindly, and Sir Thomas seeing how much she needed encouragement, tried to be all that was conciliating; but he had to work against a most untoward gravity of deportment -- and Lady Bertram, without taking half so much trouble, or speaking one word where he spoke ten, by the mere aid of a good-humoured smile, became immediately the less awful character of the two. (M.P., 12)

And it is Fanny's function in the novel not only to act as the representative of Sir Thomas' principles, but also to oppose him when he exceeds his authority. When, in seeking to exert the pressure of parental authority upon Fanny, Sir Thomas attempts to humiliate and intimidate her into marriage with Crawford, he abuses his right to that office. It is the parent's, or parent's representative's, right and responsibility to advise, and dissuade his children from rash and irrevocable acts, but he has no right, is absolutely wrong, himself to compel such a permanent connection: the parent should love, advise, restrain, encourage. He cannot finally decide: he is not God to create the life of his child. Sir Thomas's attempts to influence Fanny are the most insidious, however unconscious, kind of emotional blackmail: he seeks to play upon the strength of those very qualities which he accuses Fanny of lacking:

"I will, therefore, only add, as thinking it my duty to mark my opinion of your conduct -- that you have disappointed every expectation I had formed, and proved yourself of a character the very reverse of what I had supposed. For I had, Fanny, as I think my behaviour must have shewn, formed a very favourable opinion of you from the period of my return to England. I had thought you peculiarly free from wilfulness of temper, self-conceit, and every tendency to that independence of spirit, which prevails so much in modern days, even in young women, and which in young women is offensive and disgusting beyond all common offence. But you have now shewn me that you can be wilful and perverse, that you can and will decide for yourself, without any consideration or deference for those who have surely some right to guide you -- without even asking their advice. You have shewn yourself very, very different from any thing that I had imagined. The advantage or disadvantage of your family -- of your parents -- your brothers and sisters -- never seems to have had a moment's share in your thoughts on this occasion. How they might be benefited, how they must rejoice in such an establishment for you -- is nothing to you. You think only of yourself. . . . And I should have been very much surprised had either of my daughters, on receiving a proposal of marriage at any time, which might carry with it only half the eligibility of this, immediately and peremptorily, and without paying my opinion or my regard the compliment of any consultation, put a decided negative on it. I should have been much surprised, and much hurt, by such a proceeding. I should have thought it a gross violation of duty and respect. You are not to be judged by the same rule. You do not owe me the duty of a child. But, Fanny, if your heart can acquit you of ingratitude---" (M.P., 318-319)

Against all this Fanny must act -- her refusal, Jane Austen makes clear, is the most momentous positive action for the course of her life. Against all the pressures, Fanny Price has and uses the strength to refuse to make this act: through resisting this temptation to yield and, thus, win the approval she rightly longs for, through choosing to suffer and to face a life that promises no fulfilment that she desires, Fanny Price justifies her 'prognosis' -- it is made possible and true.

Though the basic attitude of Sir Walter and Elizabeth does not change with Anne's re-entry into the household, Sir Walter does notice a change in her -- not surprisingly it is in that area which engrosses his attention. The second spring of youth and beauty that Anne sensed and hoped for is visibly permeating her appearance. The exchange is interesting in itself:

> In the course of the same morning, Anne and her father chancing to be alone together, he began to compliment her on her improved looks; he thought her "less thin in her person, in her cheeks; her skin, her complexion, greatly improved -- clearer, fresher. Had she been using any thing in particular?" "No, nothing." "Merely Gowland," he supposed. "No, nothing at all." (145-146)

The references to Anne's new bloom become increasingly frequent henceforth.

Sir Walter and Elizabeth seek to renew a connection in the nobility that has been lost through reciprocal inadvertence with an excited assiduity and sycophancy that surprises and disgusts Anne:

> Anne had never seen her father and sister before in contact with nobility, and she must acknowledge herself disappointed. She had hoped better things from their high ideas of their own situation in life, and was reduced to form a wish which she had never foreseen -- a wish that they had more pride; for "our cousins, Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret;" "Our cousins, the Dalrymples," sounded in her ears all day long. (148)

Sir Walter's much vaunted pride is of the kind that grovels before higher ranking or more brightly decked puppets in the commonwealth of conceit; his pride, like that of Sporus, is 'Pride that licks the dust'.

> Anne was ashamed. Had Lady Dalrymple and her daughter even been very agreeable, she would still have been ashamed of

the agitation they created, but they were nothing. (149-150) Those whom her family regard with awe, seeking obsequiously to ingratiate themselves, to Anne are nothing. Significantly also her judgement distinguishes her from William Walter Elliot who, less fawningly, shares Sir Walter's opinion of the value and advantages of the connection; and Anne is firm in resisting his attempt to demonstrate that their pride is in essentials the same. She has no actual nor symbolic identity with Mr. Elliot.

Anne's dissociation from her family is emphasised in another way. While Sir Walter and his retinue eagerly make their pilgrimages to Laura-place, to the noble Dalrymples, Anne goes alone to Westgate Buildings, to Mrs. Smith. She has heard from her former governess

> of their being an old school-fellow in Bath, who had the two strong claims on her attention, of past kindness and present suffering. Miss Hamilton, now Mrs. Smith, had shewn her kindness in one of those periods of her life when it had been most valuable. Anne had gone unhappy to school, grieving for the loss of a mother whom she had dearly loved . . . and Miss Hamilton . . . had been useful and good to her in a way which had considerably lessened her misery, and could never be remembered with indifference. (152)

When Sir Walter and Elizabeth hear of the visit -- Anne declines an evening at Laura-place since she is already engaged to spend it with Mrs. Smith -- their reaction is that of thoroughbred snobs:

> Elizabeth was disdainful and Sir Walter severe.
> "Westgate Buildings!" said he; "and who is Miss Anne Elliot to be visiting in Westgate-Buildings? -- A Mrs. Smith. A widow Mrs. Smith, -- and who was her husband? One of the five thousand Mr. Smiths whose names are to be met with every where. And what is her attraction? That she is old

and sickly. -- Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary taste! Every thing that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you. But surely, you may put this old lady off till to-morrow. She is not so near her end, I presume, but that she may hope to see another day. What is her age? Forty?" (157)

Anne for once is seen as a Miss Elliot. Sir Walter here makes clear what he considers her responsibilities, though we never hear him speak of any rights.

"A widow Mrs. Smith, lodging in Westgate-buildings! -- A poor widow, barely able to live, between thirty and forty -- a mere Mrs. Smith, an every day Mrs. Smith, of all people and all names in the world, to be the chosen friend of Miss Anne Elliot, and to be preferred by her to her own family connections among the nobility of England and Ireland! Mrs. Smith, such a name." (158)

Mrs. Clay, unaware of the full insensitivity of a conceited fool, steals silently from the room.

At the beginning of February, the budding of Anne's personal spring is treated to a burst of invigorating sunshine. Mary writes telling of Louisa Musgrove's engagement to Captain Benwick,

It was almost too wonderful for belief; and it was with the greatest effort that she could remain in the room, preserve an air of calmness, and answer, the common questions of the moment. (165)

She has been proven right in her suspicions of Captain Benwick's own nature and thus of his grief. But it is not self-congratulation she feels, nor regret:

No, it was not regret which made Anne Elliot's heart beat in spite of herself, and brought the colour into her cheeks when she thought of Captain Wentworth unshackled and free. She had some feelings which she was ashamed to investigate. They were too much like joy, senseless joy! (168)

Spring, which began for Anne bleakly, then brightened

slightly, suddenly bursts into life. Henceforth the mood of the novel changes; until now there has been a sense of oppression, of dankness, and at least potential gloom. Now the pace quickens, there is a new excitement, a new sense of sunshine and life. The mood of the novel is the mood of Anne.

The Crofts, the bringers of the letter, and the bringers of 'their country habit of being almost always together' (168), are appropriately of more interest to Sir Walter than he is to them:

> [Sir Walter] was not at all ashamed of the acquaintance, and did, in fact, think and talk a great deal more about the Admiral, than the Admiral ever thought or talked about him. (168)

Admiral and Mrs. Croft 'considered their intercourse with the Elliots as a mere matter of form, and not in the least likely to afford them any pleasure' (168). To them Sir Walter is little more than nothing.

Their 'intercourse with the Elliots' -- the phrase is significant. Clearly, they do not think of Anne as an Elliot. Meeting Anne in Milsom-street, Admiral Croft laughingly remarks, "Ha! is it you? Thank you, thank you. This is treating me like a friend" (169). And of Anne, who so far has been characterised by being of use, Admiral Croft politely enquires, "Can I go any where for you, or with you? Can I be of any use?" (169).

Though Anne is considered, is of consequence with the Crofts, it is emphasised that she remains nothing to

her own family. Caught in the rain, Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay are driven home in Lady Dalrymple's barouche: Anne walks. But this is nothing to Anne: she catches sight of, then meets, confusedly, Captain Wentworth. But though Anne is not utterly composed, she is, importantly, less discomposed than Wentworth.

> He was more obviously struck and confused by the sight of her, than she had ever observed before; he looked quite red. For the first time, since their renewed acquaintance, she felt that she was betraying the least sensibility of the two. She had the advantage of him, in the preparation of the last few moments. All the overpowering, blinding, bewildering, first effects of strong surprise were over with her. Still, however, she had enough to feel! It was agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery.
>
> He spoke to her, and then turned away. The character of his manner was embarrassment. She could not have called it either cold or friendly, or any thing so certainly as embarrassed. (175-176)

Even Anne, diffident as she is, knows that no one is embarrassed by what is of no consequence.

> Anne continu[ed] fully sensible of his being less at ease than formerly. They had, by dint of being so very much together, got to speak to each other with a considerable portion of apparent indifference and calmness; but he could not do it now. (176)

Like Anne, Wentworth is beneath her sister's regard -- at present: 'It did not surprise, but it grieved Anne to observe that Elizabeth would not know him' (176). But Anne is not beneath general notice. We overhear, as does Wentworth, others of his party remarking upon Anne:

> "She is pretty, I think; Anne Elliot; very pretty, when one comes to look at her. It is not the fashion to say so, but I confess I admire her more than her sister."
>
> "Oh! so do I."
>
> "And so do I. No comparison." (177-178)

Moreover, Wentworth has seen the attentions of W. W. Elliot to Anne, and the seeds of a powerful jealousy are sown.

Anne, in her own family party, is contemptuous of their 'sophisticated' amusements, impatiently annoyed by the 'elegant stupidity of private parties' (180).

> Anne, wearied of such a state of stagnation, sick of knowing nothing, and fancying herself stronger because her strength was not tried, was quite impatient for the concert evening. It was a concert for the benefit of a person patronised by Lady Dalrymple. Of course they must attend. It was really expected to be a good one, and Captain Wentworth was very fond of music. (180)

On the evening of the concert, Anne acts positively in recognition of Wentworth, and in defiance of what she knows of her family:

> Captain Wentworth walked in alone. Anne was the nearest to him, and making yet a little advance, she instantly spoke. He was preparing only to bow and pass on, but her gentle "How do you do?" brought him out of the straight line to stand near her, and make enquiries in return, in spite of the formidable father and sister in the back ground. Their being in the back ground was a support to Anne; she knew nothing of their looks, and felt equal to every thing which she believed right to be done. (181)

However, the Elliots, after due consideration, see fit to notice the presence of Captain Wentworth.

> While they were speaking, a whispering between her father and Elizabeth caught her ear. She could not distinguish, but she must guess the subject; and on Captain Wentworth's making a distant bow, she comprehended that her father had judged so well as to give him that simple acknowledgement of acquaintance, and she was just in time by a side glance to see a slight curtsey from Elizabeth herself. This, though late and reluctant and ungracious, was yet better than nothing, and her spirits improved. (181)

In conversation Wentworth makes a point of praising Anne's behaviour at Lyme, and of expressing dissatisfaction with his own conduct. His remarks on the Musgrove family's

delighted encouragement of the engagement are in evident contrast to what he knows of and expects from the Elliots.

"They have no difficulties to contend with at home, no opposition, no caprice, no delays. -- The Musgroves are behaving like themselves, most honourable and kindly, only anxious with true parental hearts to promote their daughter's comfort. All this is much, very much in favour of their happiness; more perhaps --" (182)

Wentworth has achieved a new perspective on Louisa Musgrove, on Captain Benwick, and, of course, on Anne.

"A man like him, in his situation! With a heart pierced, wounded, almost broken! Fanny Harville was a very superior creature; and his attachment to her was indeed attachment. A man does not recover from such a devotion of the heart to such a woman! -- He ought not -- he does not." (183)

This conversation is conducted in a strange kind of double talk, involving a close parallelism between the events of Lyme and the events of eight years before. When Anne expresses a firm wish to see Lyme again, Wentworth exclaims,

"The horror and distress you were involved in -- the stretch of mind, the wear of spirits! -- I should have thought your last impressions of Lyme must have been strong disgust."
"The last few hours were certainly very painful," replied Anne: "but when pain is over, the remembrance of it often becomes a pleasure. One does not love a place the less for having suffered in it, unless it has been all suffering, nothing but suffering -- which was by no means the case at Lyme." (183-184)

The entrance of the Dalrymples divides Anne from Wentworth, but the gloom of so short a while since is gone: Anne is compassionately exultant.

She was in good humour with all. She had received ideas which disposed her to be courteous and kind to all, and to pity every one, as being less happy than herself. (184)

A blunt contrast is drawn between the significant and the insignificant happiness of Anne and Elizabeth Elliot on

this occasion:

> Very, very happy were both Elizabeth and Anne Elliot as they walked in. Elizabeth, arm in arm with Miss Carteret, and looking on the broad back of the dowager Viscountess Dalrymple before her, had nothing to wish for which did not seem within her reach; and Anne -- but it would be an insult to the nature of Anne's felicity, to draw any comparison between it and her sister's; the origin of one all selfish vanity, of the other all generous attachment.
> Anne saw nothing, thought nothing of the brilliancy of the room. Her happiness was from within. Her eyes were bright, and her cheeks glowed -- but she knew nothing about it. (185)

What is everything to the Elliots is nothing to Anne -- 'Her happiness was from within.' Its sanction is conviction: 'He must love her' (186).

Wentworth, noticed earlier by the Elliots, grows in consequence for them. Anne's attention is caught by her father and Lady Dalrymple speaking of him.

> "A well-looking man," said Sir Walter, "a very well-looking man."
> "A very fine young man indeed!" said Lady Dalrymple. "More air than one often sees in Bath. -- Irish, I dare say."
> "No, I just know his name. A bowing acquaintance. Wentworth -- Captain Wentworth of the navy." (188)

Anne, who has so long been the object of inattention, begins to seek to make others the object of her inattention. Mr. Elliot's attentions are annoying. During the first interval, we learn, Anne 'had the pleasure of getting rid of Mr. Elliot' (189). Mr. Elliot is to become a still greater problem for Anne than she is yet aware. When she next sees Wentworth he seems 'withdrawn from her' (188) and, in conversation with him, Anne detects a striking change.

Why was it? She thought of her father -- of Lady Russell. Could there have been any unpleasant glances? He began by speaking of the concert, gravely; more like the Captain Wentworth of Uppercross; owned himself disappointed, had expected better singing; and, in short, must confess that he should not be sorry when it was over. (190)

Anne's encouragement brings an improvement in Wentworth's spirits -- he is even about to sit by her, 'when, at that moment, a touch on her shoulder obliged Anne to turn round. -- It came from Mr. Elliot' (190). The final exchange is decisive:

"He must wish her good night. He was going -- he should get home as fast as he could."
"Is not this song worth staying for?" said Anne, suddenly struck by an idea which made her yet more anxious to be encouraging.
"No!" he replied impressively, "there is nothing worth my staying for;" and he was gone directly.
Jealousy of Mr. Elliot! It was the only intelligible motive. Captain Wentworth jealous of her affection! Could she have believed it a week ago -- three hours ago! (190)

The change in Wentworth is complete -- from considered indifference to fierce, oppressive jealousy.

From the unattended, Anne becomes the eager evader of attention: 'to avoid Mr. Elliot was almost a first object' (192). And in face of Mrs. Smith's arch assumptions about the likely announcement concerning herself and Mr. Elliot, Anne insists, and insists again, "he is nothing to me. Surely, this must be calm enough. And upon my word, he is nothing to me" (196).

The conviction once carried, Mrs. Smith exposes William Walter Elliot's true character. He is, perhaps, the most unredeemed of Jane Austen's anti-heroes, the closest thing in her novels to a villain. Mrs. Smith's

impassioned denunciation has no doubt on this matter:

"He is totally beyond the reach of any sentiment of justice or compassion. Oh! he is black at heart, hollow and black!" (199)

A product of London and independence -- we are told nothing of his immediate family -- Elliot is cold-hearted and totally unscrupulous. This is the true nature of the man who is such a favourite with Sir Walter. But it is unlikely that such considerations would be of weight to Sir Walter Elliot and his daughter. What would strike him, however, is Elliot's confirmed youthful contempt of the baronetcy. Mrs. Smith tells Anne,

"His chance of the Kellynch estate was something, but all the honour of the family he held as cheap as dirt. I have often heard him declare, that if baronetcies were saleable, any body should have his for fifty pounds, arms and motto, name and livery included". (202)

And Sir Walter would be severely smitten by the contents of the letter Mrs. Smith produces. The assertion that "my first visit to Kellynch will be with a surveyor, to tell me how to bring it with best advantage to the hammer" (202) would shock him enough. But the last paragraph rises to a climax of scorn which directs itself towards a particular object:

"I wish I had any name but Elliot. I am sick of it. The name of Walter I can drop, thank God! and I desire you will never insult me with my second W. again, meaning for the rest of my life, to be only yours truly,

"Wm. ELLIOT."
(203-204)

The personal contempt of <u>this</u> would surely bring on apoplexy.

These, then, were the opinions of the future Sir

William Walter Elliot. But a change of heart -- rather of interest -- has taken place, and William Walter Elliot bids fair to continue the traditions of sybaritism and snobbery that Sir Walter has fulfilled. Indeed, his renewal of relations with the family has arisen from the fear that Sir Walter may marry Mrs. Clay -- once more Anne is vindicated -- thus jeopardising his chances of the baronetcy. In fact, Elliot finally disposes of this danger by himself engaging Mrs. Clay's affections. In the final chapter, we are told,

> He soon quitted Bath; and on Mrs. Clay's quitting it likewise soon afterwards, and being next heard of as established under his protection in London, it was evident how double a game he had been playing, and how determined he was to save himself from being cut out by one artful woman, at least.
>
> Mrs. Clay's affections had overpowered her interest, and she had sacrificed, for the young man's sake, the possibility of scheming longer for Sir Walter. (250)

But the arrogant and conceited are always finally the victims of their own self-satisfaction in Jane Austen -- think of Robert Ferrars -- and here too she suggests that Mrs. Clay, whose 'affections' we may suspect, is by no means finally defeated in her ambition of becoming the next Lady Elliot:

> She has abilities, however, as well as affections; and it is now a doubtful point whether his cunning, or hers, may finally carry the day; whether, after preventing her from being the wife of Sir Walter, he may not be wheedled and caressed at last into making her the wife of Sir William. (250)

Thus, the likely succession of the Elliot line is this: a baronet whose first wife was the daughter of a grazier and the grand-daughter of a butcher, his Lady -- Mrs. Clay. I said earlier that Sir Walter and Elizabeth were culminant:

William Walter and Mrs. Clay are surely nugatory.

Anne's closing reflection on what Mrs. Smith has told her is a terse comment on irresponsible persuasion:

> Anne could just acknowledge within herself such a possibility of having been induced to marry him, as made her shudder at the idea of the misery which must have followed. It was just possible that she might have been persuaded by Lady Russell! (211)

The coy allusions of Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay, and Mrs. Clay's arch expectations now assume a new quality of irony, though they do not yet carry their total impact since we are unaware of the full extent of Mrs. Clay's duplicity. Nonetheless her exclamation, "Exactly like father and son! Dear Miss Elliot, may I not say father and son?" (213), is heavily laden for Anne and for us.

But the unpleasantness for Anne of being in Mr. Elliot's company is counterbalanced by the pleasure the arrival in Bath of the Musgroves causes her. Anne equals Wentworth's praise of Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove:

> "Such excellent parents as Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove," exclaimed Anne, "should be happy in their children's marriages. They do every thing to confer happiness, I am sure. What a blessing to young people to be in such hands! Your father and mother seem so totally free from all those ambitious feelings which have led to so much misconduct and misery, both in young and old!" (218)

Their arrival is much less welcome to Elizabeth:

> Elizabeth was, for a short time, suffering a good deal. She felt that Mrs. Musgrove and all her party ought to be asked to dine with them, but she could not bear to have the difference of style, the reduction of servants, which a dinner must betray, witnessed by those who had always been so inferior to the Elliots of Kellynch. It was a struggle between propriety and vanity; but vanity got the better, and then Elizabeth was happy again. These were her internal persuasions. -- "Old-fashioned notions -- country hospitality

-- we do not profess to give dinners -- few people in Bath do -- Lady Alicia never does; did not even ask her own sister's family". (219)

Anne's consequence in the Musgrove family circle is such as she has never felt at home: the contrast is painful to Anne, but she faces it firmly:

They found Mrs. Musgrove and her daughter within, and by themselves, and Anne had the kindest welcome from each. Henrietta was exactly in that state of recently-improved views, of fresh-formed happiness, which made her full of regard and interest for every body she had ever liked before at all; and Mrs. Musgrove's real affection had been won by her usefulness when they were in distress. It was aheartiness, and a warmth, and a sincerity which Anne delighted in the more, from the sad want of such blessings at home. (220)

During the course of the gathering, at which Wentworth is present, Anne makes her most positive public self-assertion, rejecting the Elliots and their concerns. Charles Musgrove has taken a box for the theatre that evening; Mary is excited and anxious: they are already engaged at Camden-place "to meet Lady Dalrymple and her daughter, with Mr. Elliot -- all the principal family connexions" (223). Charles is shockingly irreverent: "What is Mr. Elliot to me?" (224). So it goes on until Mrs. Musgrove calms the troubled domestic waters:

"We had better put it off. Charles, you had much better go back, and change the box for Tuesday. It would be a great pity to be divided, and we should be losing Miss Anne too, if there is a party at her father's; and I am sure neither Henrietta nor I should care at all for the play, if Miss Anne could not be with us." (224)

Anne seizes the opportunity:

"If it depended only on my inclination, ma'am, the party at home (excepting on Mary's account) would not be the smallest impediment. I have no pleasure in the sort of

meeting, and should be too happy to exchange it for a play, and with you."

She had spoken it; but she trembled when it was done, conscious that her words were listened to, and daring not even to try to observe their effect. (224-225)

Their effect is fortunate: Wentworth approaches:

"You have not been long enough in Bath," said he, "to enjoy the evening parties of the place."

"Oh! no. The usual character of them has nothing for me. I am no card-player."

"You were not formerly, I know. You did not use to like cards; but time makes many changes."

"I am not yet so much changed," cried Anne, and stopped, fearing she hardly knew what misconstruction. After waiting a few moments he said -- and as if it were the result of immediate feeling -- "It is a period, indeed! Eight years and a half is a period!" (225)

But their movement to full understanding is interrupted,

and the entrance of the Elliots causes a drastic change in

atmosphere:

The door was thrown open for Sir Walter and Miss Elliot, whose entrance seemed to give a general chill. Anne felt an instant oppression, and, wherever she looked, saw symptoms of the same. The comfort, the freedom, the gaiety of the room was over, hushed into cold composure, determined silence, or insipid talk, to meet the heartless elegance of her father and sister. How mortifying to feel that it was so! (226)

Captain Wentworth's recognition by the Elliots is finalised:

he is invited into their family circle.

The truth was, that Elizabeth had been long enough in Bath, to understand the importance of a man of such an air and appearance as his. The past was nothing. The present was that Captain Wentworth would move about well in her drawing-room. (226)

Anne is conscious of Wentworth's reaction to the favour:

She knew him; she saw disdain in his eye, and could not venture to believe that he had determined to accept such an offering, as atonement for all the insolence of the past. Her spirits sank. He held the card in his hand after they were gone, as if deeply considering it. (227)

But Wentworth's entrance into the Elliot's home depends not upon this invitation: it depends on the acceptance of an invitation he himself makes: he asks Anne to marry him. The final sentence of his letter of proposal insists that he enters Sir Walter Elliot's house with no thought for him: he thinks only of Anne:

"A word, a look will be enough to decide whether I enter your father's house this evening, or never." (238)

Wentworth's letter of proposal is given at the White Hart, where Admiral and Mrs. Croft are staying. The events leading to his action are notable. A conversation between Mrs. Musgrove and Mrs. Croft recalls the situation of Wentworth and Anne, eight and a half years before. Mrs. Croft exclaims upon the dangers of long engagements, and, speaking of uncertain engagements, "an engagement which may be long" (231), goes on to describe exactly Anne's motives for breaking her engagement with Wentworth:

"To begin without knowing that at such a time there will be the means of marrying, I hold to be very unsafe and unwise, and what, I think, all parents should prevent as far as they can." (231)

Fanny Harville's engagement to Benwick had been another such engagement, and Wentworth is at present engaged in discharging one of its painful consequences. Anne's conversation with Captain Harville and her assertion of woman's constancy is what finally impels Wentworth to act. Their conversation is interrupted and their attention drawn to Captain Wentworth by a slight noise:

It was nothing more than that his pen had fallen down, but

Anne was startled at finding him nearer than she had supposed, and half inclined to suspect that the pen had only fallen, because he had been occupied by them, striving to catch sounds, which yet she did not think he could have caught. (233-234)

Anne, thus, perhaps unintentionally, has done much to grasp at happiness. She does still more, astonishingly much for a woman, particularly in Jane Austen's day; but all that she does increases our admiration and respect for her, our awareness of the quality of nothing. She does no more than confess, as far as she may, the truth and depth of her feelings:

"All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one, you need not covet it) is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone."
She could not immediately have uttered another sentence; her heart was too full, her breath too much oppressed. (235)

If it is meaningful to speak of Jane Austen's heroines deserving or earning their happiness, then Anne Elliot is most deserving of hers: the meaning of this cry is the meaning of eight and a half years of muted passion and blank loneliness. Its consummation, 'the work of an instant'.

He had passed out of the room without a look!
She had only time, however, to move closer to the table where he had been writing, when footsteps were heard returning; it was himself. He begged their pardon, but he had forgotten his gloves, and instantly crossing the room to the writing table, and standing with his back towards Mrs. Musgrove, he drew out a letter from under the scattered paper, placed it before Anne with eyes of glowing entreaty fixed on her for a moment, and hastily collecting his gloves, was again out of the room, almost before Mrs. Musgrove was aware of his being in it -- the work of an instant! (236)

Anne Elliot remains nothing to her family: no matter -- to Frederick Wentworth, she is what he is to her:

he now knows the quality of nothing.

"I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I have been, but never inconstant. You alone have brought me to Bath. For you alone I think and plan." (237)

Indeed, Anne's family are now essentially nothing to her. Despite all the parade, all the insistence upon the value of the Elliot connection, Anne sees them for what they are:

Anne . . . had no other alloy to the happiness of her prospects than what arose from the consciousness of having no relations to bestow on him which a man of sense could value. There she felt her own inferiority keenly. The disproportion of fortune was nothing; it did not give her a moment's regret; but to have no family to receive and estimate him properly; nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good will to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters, was a source of as lively pain as her mind could well be sensible of, under circumstances of otherwise strong felicity. She had but two friends in the world to add to his list, Lady Russell and Mrs. Smith. (251)

Indeed, Captain Wentworth is a more acceptable in-law to them than they are welcome relations to him.

Sir Walter made no objection, and Elizabeth did nothing worse than look cold and unconcerned. Captain Wentworth, with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody. He was now esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift baronet, who had not principle or sense enough to maintain himself in the situation in which Providence had placed him, and who could give his daughter at present but a small part of the share of ten thousand pounds which must be hers hereafter. (248)

And on closer inspection Sir Walter finds himself quite pleased with his new son-in-law -- his striking appearance and well-sounding name: the name of Wentworth goes in the volume of honour.

Frederick Wentworth has been taught much by Anne Elliot. She has taught him to shed his pride, that he still loves her, and that her yielding to persuasion was not a sign of weakness in herself, nor in her love, but a recognition of her own inexperience and of the filial responsibility at least to consider guidance. Anne herself learns that happiness is possible for her and that the happiness she gains is in consequence rather than in despite of her conduct at nineteen.

"I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me, however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was, perhaps, one of those cases in which the advice is good or bad only as the event decides; and for myself, I certainly never should, in any circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience. I have now, as far as such a sentiment is allowable in human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion." (246)

This reflection of Anne's consciousness to Wentworth takes place on 'one of these short meetings, each apparently occupied in admiring a fine display of green-house plants' (246). In gazing at the green-house plant, Anne Elliot sees herself as she was when she had acceded to Lady Russell's persuasion, sheltered and inexperienced, and as she was at the beginning of the novel, enclosed and unhealthy, because the soil in which she was planted was not her soil.

In a sonnet addressed to Spenser, Keats remarks:

> The flower must drink the nature of its soil,
> Before it can put forth its blossoming.

The nature of Anne's soil at the beginning of the novel is barren: she lives in a family where she has no rights, only responsibilities, where she is 'only Anne.' The novel presents the physical and moral regeneration of Anne because it provides her with the right kind of soil: the soil in which she 'can put forth her blossoming.'

CONCLUSION

Jane Austen's stature as novelist has been questioned most insistently on account of that very feature of her work which I have chosen to stress. Her description of the subject-matter of her work as '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village' has led many critics and readers to conclude that the range and inclusiveness of her writing, its significance and depth, are limited and circumscribed almost in proportion as '3 or 4 Families' are to the world, or as 'the daily round, the common task' are to the mind of man and his capacity for passion, as the sameness and tameness of family, of domestic, life are to the immensity, the mystery and grandeur of the human spirit. Charlotte Brontë gave what has become close to classic expression to this sense of the final superficiality, even triviality, of Jane Austen's vision and presentation of human nature and of the human condition:

> I had not read Pride and Prejudice till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book. And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a common face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses.[1]

This letter was shortly followed by another in which Charlotte Brontë declares: 'Miss Austen being, as you say, without "sentiment", without poetry, maybe is sensible, real (more

real than true), but she cannot be great.'[2] To W. S. Williams in 1850, she is even more scathing.

> She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; . . . Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death -- this Miss Austen ignores. She no more, with her mind's eye, beholds the heart of her race than each man, with bodily vision, sees the heart in his heaving breast. Jane Austen was a complete and most sensible lady, but a very incomplete and rather insensible (not senseless) woman.[3]

The implication of all this is that Jane Austen, in concerning herself with the 'human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet', as indeed she does, is less concerned with reality, with what is at the core of existence, than are those who make their subject "the burning human heart".[4] But these things are no less a part of humanity and of the real than is the human heart, burning or otherwise. What Lionel Trilling, in 1947, said of 'reality' and truth in America, and in the modern novel generally, is, in its way, direct comment upon and answer to this kind of assumption that there is a graduated scale of the real and the true where the gradations are those of intensity and passion, of violence and power. Professor Trilling expresses the popular attitude to modern fiction thus:

> The public is probably not deceived about the quality of most of these books. If the question of quality is brought up, the answer is likely to be: no, they are not great, they are not imaginative, they are not 'literature.' But there is an unexpected addendum: and perhaps they are all the better for not being imaginative, for not being literature -- they are not literature, they are reality, and in

> a time like this what we need is reality in large doses. . . . Reality, as conceived by us, is whatever is external and hard, gross, unpleasant. Involved in its meaning is the idea of power conceived in a particular way.[5]

Thus a work has a head start in relevance and reality if it deals with a particular kind of subject-matter, if it presents and emphasises that subject-matter in a particular way. Essentially this is what Charlotte Brontë is also saying.

Trilling dissents from this judgement and he notes a significant fact: 'in proportion as we have committed ourselves to our particular idea of reality we have lost our interest in manners. For the novel this is a definitive condition because it is inescapably true that in novels manners make men.'[6] Quite early in his essay, Professor Trilling had asserted: 'The great novelists knew that manners indicate the largest intentions of men's souls as well as the smallest and they are perpetually concerned to catch the meaning of every dim implicit hint.'[7] This is the very knowledge that Jane Austen had, the knowledge which is the basis of her novels.

Reginald Farrer long since recognized that 'Talk of her "limitations" is vain, and based on a misapprehension. . . . It must never be thought that limitation of scene implies limitation of human emotion. . . . Jane Austen's heroes and heroines and subject-matter are, in fact, universal human nature, and conterminous with it, though manifested only in one class, with that class's

superficial limitations, in habits and manner of life.'[8] And Lord David Cecil rightly exclaims ' Essential human nature -- this is always Jane Austen's preoccupation.'[9] '3 or 4 Families in a Country Village' is Jane Austen's chosen definition of the area of her subject-matter: her choice does not limit, does not ration her 'quantum' of reality. She chose to write about these families not simply because she knew the pattern and procedure of country family life so closely, not because she was timidly apprehensive of a venture beyond this sphere, not just because she knew the limitations of her experience and wisely accepted that greater, more ambitious subjects were beyond her reach, not because she was temperamentally or spritually withered and arid: what she wrote about was the 'delight' of her life, 'the very thing to work on'. Life in a country village is no less life than life on wild, wind-swept moors, than life on the battlefield or in the trenches of Europe. The ferocious passion of a Heathcliff is inherently no more true, no more real, than the endless patter of a Miss Bates. Jane Austen saw life clear and she saw it full. This is a part of her genius; but she not only saw life in its complexity and subtlety, catching 'the meaning of every dim implicit hint' of human behaviour, she translated, shaped, re-created her observation, all its nicety and fine discrimination, giving her creatures the richness of suggestion, the fullness of implication, that she discerned in life.

Henry James saw the folly of prescriptive or proscriptive literary judgements, judgements that say what a work shall or shall not be rather than judge it for what it is. In 'The Art of Fiction', James takes Walter Besant to task:

> He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be. . . . Certain traditions on the subject, applied a priori, have already had much to answer for, and that the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom.[10]

James's criterion for judging the novel is simple: it is the only fully adequate criterion we can hope to possess: 'the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has it not.'[11] There are no assuredly great, no certainly living subjects: it is the finished novel that is great, that lives, and the greatness and life are given it by the novelist.

Humberstall, the mess-waiter in Kipling's short story, recounts a dispute he had heard among the Janeites:

> But, as I was sayin', 'Ammick says what a pity 'twas Jane 'ad died barren. "I deny that," says Mosse. "I maintain she was fruitful in the 'ighest sense o' the word." An' Mosse knew about such things, too. "I'm inclined to agree with 'Ammick," says young Gander. "Any 'ow, she's left no direct an' lawful prog'ny."[12]

Jane Austen's concern was always with the family, yet she never married and thus had no children of her own. In a letter to Cassandra written from Chawton, Friday, 29 January, 1813, Jane Austen happily exclaimed, 'I want to tell you that I have got my own darling child from London.'[13]

She is writing of Pride and Prejudice. For Jane Austen her novels were also her family.

NOTES

I: INTRODUCTION AND ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD

[1]Kipling, 'The Janeites', in Debits and Credits, 153-154.

[2]Letters, ed. Chapman. Letter 200, p. 401.

[3]Garrod, in Pride and Prejudice, ed. Booth, 192.

[4]Spenser, 'The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney', Collected Essays, ed. Purves, 87-88.

[5]Richard Simpson, 'Jane Austen', North British Review, XII, 103 (April, 1870), 137.

[6]Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 1-2

[7]Forster, Abinger Harvest, 179.

[8]Chapman, 'Preface' to Volume the Third, vii-viii.

[9]Memoir, 16.

[10]Ibid., 155-157.

[11]Sense and Sensibility, 332. All references are to Chapman's edition of Jane Austen's works. Where appropriate these are incorporated in the text. For convenience in referring to works I give abbreviated titles as follows:

N.A. - Northanger Abbey
S.S. - Sense and Sensibility
E. - Emma
M.P. - Mansfield Park
P. - Persuasion
M.W. - Minor Works.
P.P. - Pride and Prejudice

[12]Mudrick, Jane Austen, 9.

[13]Tolstoi, Anna Karenina, tr. Constance Garnett. New York: Random House, 1939, 3

[14]Muggeridge, Affairs of the Heart.

II: THE SAVING LOSS OF SELF

[1]Avowals, 38.

[2]Ibid., 39.

[3]George Villiers, The Rehearsal, Act III, Scene I, Restoration Plays, 27.

[4]Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 6.

[5]Boswell, Life of Johnson, 334.

[6]Sense and Sensibility, 7. All references are to Chapman's edition of Jane Austen's works.

[7]Mudrick, Jane Austen, 90.

[8]Ibid., 93.

[9]Lerner, The Truthtellers, 162.

[10]Wright, Jane Austen's Novels, 99.

[11]Wiesenfarth, The Errand of Form, 53.

[12]Wright, 93.

[13]Life and Letters, 105.

[14]The Lounger, Number 20, 1785.

[15]'Facts are such horrid things!' Mrs. Johnson to Lady Susan Vernon. Minor Works, 303.

[16]In Emma, Knightley speaks of the truly 'amiable' as follows: "No, Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very 'aimable', have very good manners, and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him." (E., 149)
On 'candour' Elizabeth Bennet's laughing remark to Jane is informative: "But to be candid without ostentation or design -- to take the good of every body's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad -- belongs to you alone." (P.P., 14)

[17]See Sense and Sensibility, 294.

[18]Minor Works, 87.

[19]The 'world' saves both Marianne and Elinor. Willoughby marries Miss Grey for her money, thus awakening Marianne to reality, and saving her from a marriage which, we are left in no doubt, would have been disastrous; Lucy Steele is drawn off by Robert Ferrar's cash, so that the union between Elinor and Edward may take place.

[20]The regeneration of the morally and spiritually lethargic or corrupt, the redirection of those who have been following false lights, through severe, usually almost fatal, illness, is a recurrent symbolic pattern. Jane Austen herself again makes use of the reformative illness, though not with a central character, in Mansfield Park. Tom Bertram is taken dangerously ill, and recovers a calmer, more serious man. In Pamela, the reform of Mr. B's intentions towards Pamela is marked by a serious illness. Arthur Clennam's sickness and despair in Little Dorrit bring him close to death, but he emerges with a cleansed perspective on himself and on life. Peregrine Pickle, and Arthur Donnithorne, in Adam Bede, suffer similar chastening and purgative illnesses. The pattern is clearly archetypal, relating to the central Christian myth of the death and rebirth of Christ -- most obviously mirrored in the Christ figures of romance -- and to the complementary phoenix and similar myths.

[21]In Love and Freindship, Sophia dies from 'a cold caught by her continued faintings in the open air as the Dew was falling the Evening before' (M.W., 101). The situation and Sophia's parting words form a curious, almost parodic, comment upon Marianne's illness in Sense and Sensibility. Nonetheless they help my point.

[22]See David Cecil, 'Jane Austen', in Poets and Story-tellers, 99.

[23]See Sense and Sensibility, 30.

III: "HE IS A GENTLEMAN; I AM A GENTLEMAN'S DAUGHTER: SO FAR WE ARE EQUAL."

[1]Chapman, Facts and Problems, 184.

[2]After receiving Mr. Collins' letter warning of the attendant dangers should Elizabeth marry Darcy, Mr. Bennet, seeing that Elizabeth is not so taken with the joke as he expected, exclaims, "But, Lizzy, you look as if you did not enjoy it. You are not going to be Missish, I hope, and pretend to be affronted at an idle report. For what do we

live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?" (P.P., 364).

[3]Letters, To Cassandra, 4 February, 1813. In Chapman, No. 77, p. 299.

[4]Jane Eyre, Chapter 23, 257.

[5]Richard Simpson, North British Review, XII, 103 (April 1870), 137.

[6]Quoted in Bradbrook, Jane Austen and Her Predecessors, 152-153.

IV: "THE QUALITY OF NOTHING"

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, 76.

[2]Tale of a Tub, ed. Pinkus, 44.

[3]Letter to Fanny Knight, Sunday, 23 March, 1817. In Chapman, No. 142, p. 487.

[4]Elizabeth gives Wentworth the invitation to her soirée with perfect easiness: 'The past was nothing. The present was that Captain Wentworth would move about well in her drawing-room' (P. 226).

[5]See also on this Chapter I, 11-12, and Chapter II, 33.

[6]Letter to Cassandra, Tuesday, August, 1796. In Chapman, No. 3, p. 7.

[7]Chapman, Facts and Problems, 47-48.

[8]Marcel, 81.

[9]Jane Austen tells us this so casually that it may pass unnoticed. Catherine remembers that her brother, James, 'had lately formed an intimacy with a young man of his own college, of the name of Thorpe; and that he had spent the last week of the Christmas vacation with his family, near London' (N.A., 33).

[10]Though it is, I think, true that such conditions as these form the background of Jane Austen's anti-characters, the conditions are rather elucidatory than deterministic: neither all orphans nor all children of unhappy families are wicked in Jane Austen -- Jane Fairfax, Mrs. Smith, Fanny

Price, Edward Ferrars; nor because one lives in London does it inevitably mean that one is a bad lot -- the Gardiners.

[11]Memoir, 13-14. In Mansfield Park, it is clear that William Price is saved by the navy from the general degeneracy of his family.

[12]See on this Donald Gray's 'Jane Austen and the Peerage', reprinted in Jane Austen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Watt, esp. 159-160.

[13]Quoted in Kenneth Moler's Jane Austen's Art of Allusion, 194. Moler's chapter, 'Persuasion and the Modern Philosophy', is a valuable examination of the theme of persuasion in this novel and the prevalent contemporary views on the subject.

CONCLUSION

[1]Letter to George Henry Lewes from Haworth, January 12th, 1848. Quoted in Heath, Discussions of Jane Austen, 17.

[2]To George Henry Lewes, January 18th, 1848. Quoted in Heath, 18.

[3]April 12th, 1850. Quoted in Heath, 18.

[4]The phrase is George Moore's. In Avowals he writes: "the means are as simple as the result is amazing. Listen to it again. A young girl of twenty, jilted, comes up to London with her mother and sister, and she sees her lover at an assembly; he comes forward and addresses a few words more to her sister than to herself within hearing of a dozen people, and it is here that we find the burning human heart in English prose narrative for the first, and alas, for the last time" (43-44). "Here" is, of course, in Sense and Sensibility -- in Jane Austen. Moore claims "Miss Austen gives us all the agony of passion the human heart can feel; she was the first; and none has written the scene that we all desire to write as truthfully as she has; when Balzac and Tourguéneff rewrote it they wrote more elaborately, but their achievements are not greater" (43).

[5]'Manners, Morals, and the Novel', The Liberal Imagination, 215.

[6]Ibid., 216.

[7]Ibid., 211-212.

[8]'Jane Austen', in Heath, 21.

[9]'Jane Austen', Poets and Story-tellers, 114.

[10]'The Art of Fiction' in The Future of the Novel, ed. Edel, 9.

[11]Ibid., 16.

[12]'The Janeites', Debits and Credits, 153.

[13]In Chapman, Letter 76, p. 297.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

E.	Emma
ed.	editor
M.P.	Mansfield Park
M.W.	Minor Works, edited by R. W. Chapman
N.A.	Northanger Abbey
NCF	Nineteenth Century Fiction
P.	Persuasion
P.P.	Pride and Prejudice
TLS	[London] Times Literary Supplement
S.S.	Sense and Sensibility

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